

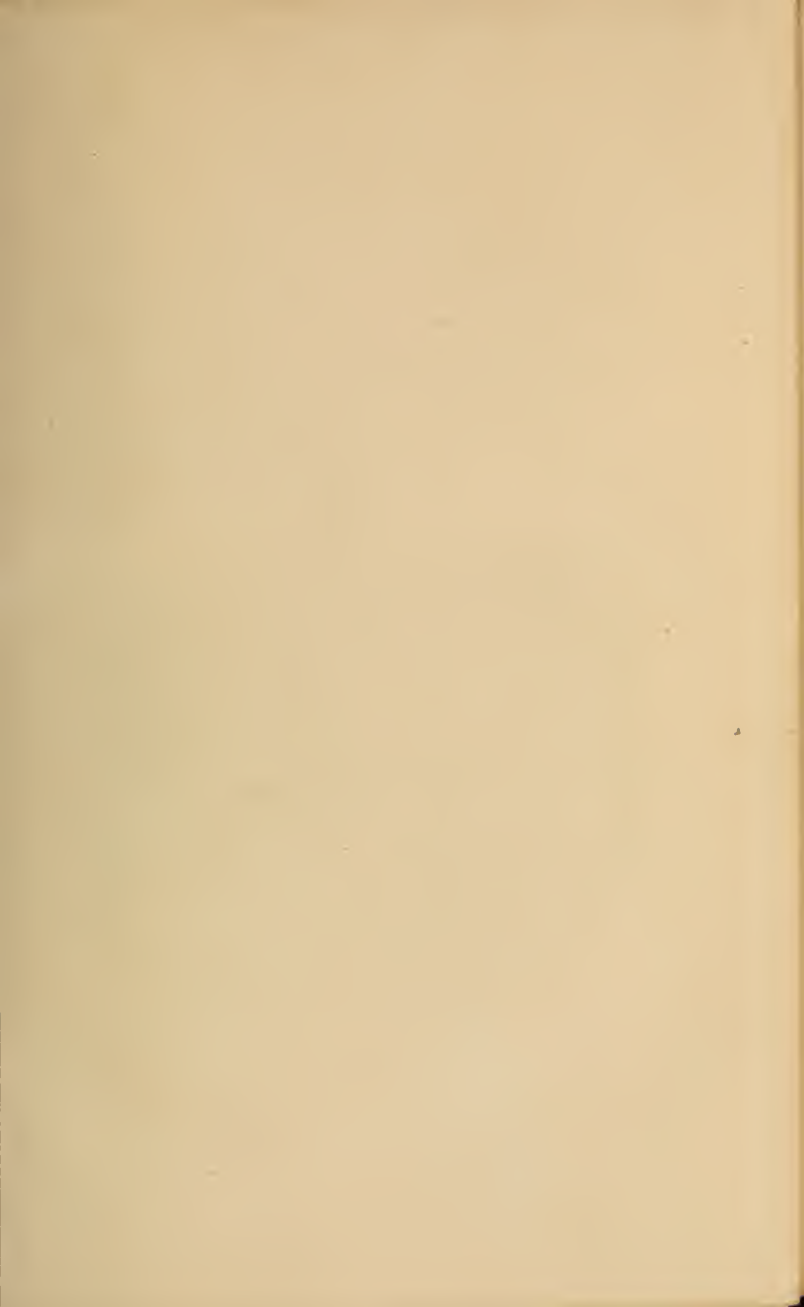
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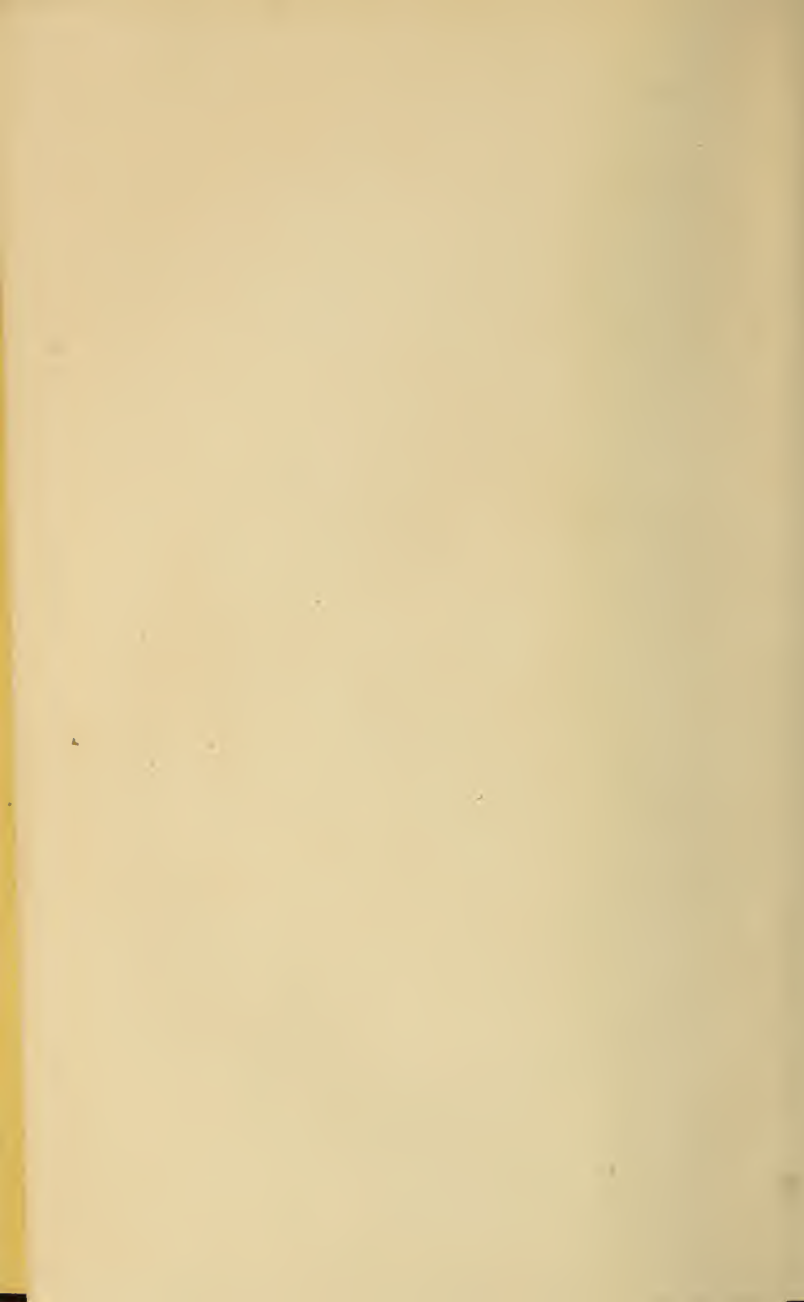
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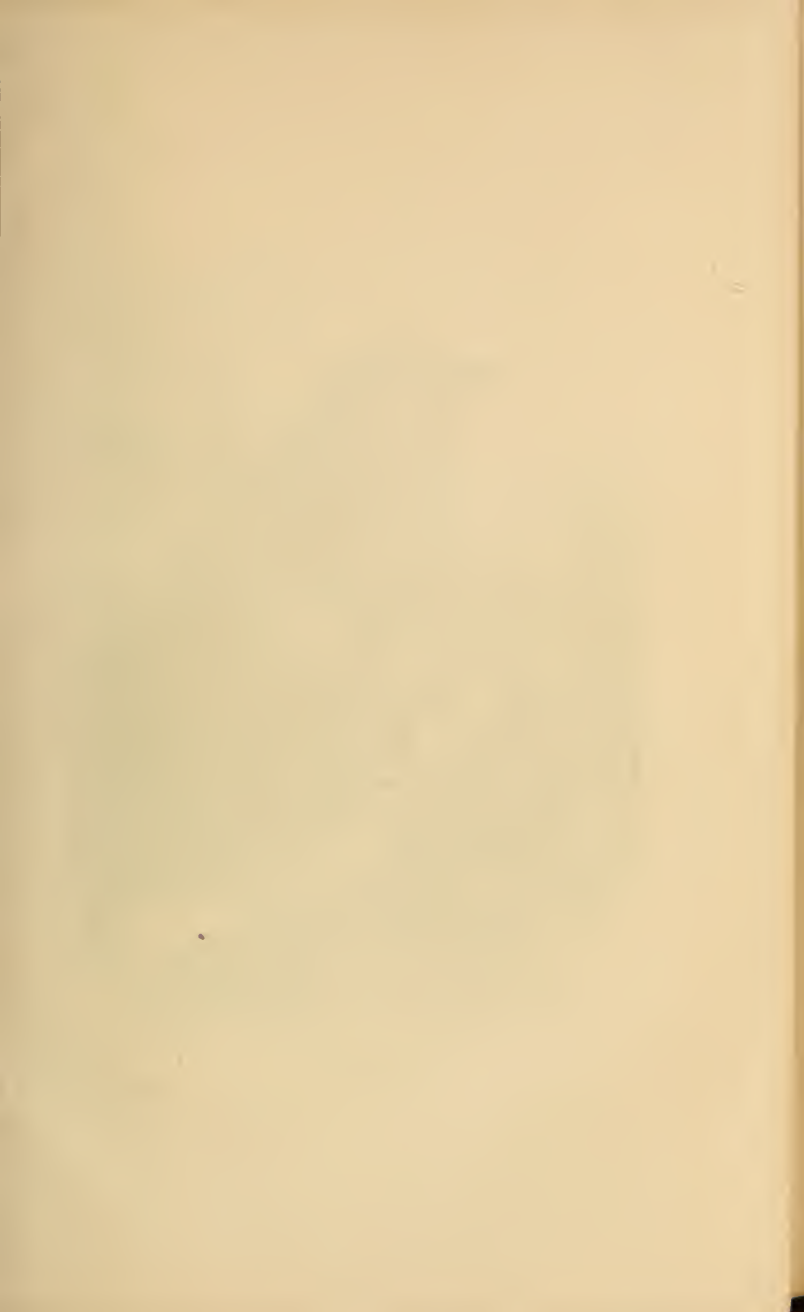
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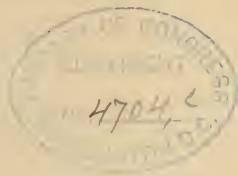
AMONG THE LILIES

AND ELSEWHERE,

WITH JESUS.

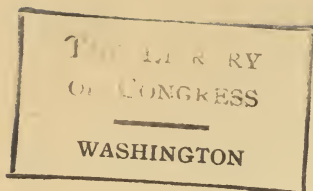
PLEASANT TALKS WITH THE YOUNG ON PASSAGES
OF SCRIPTURE.

BY THE
REV. CHARLES A. SMITH, D.D.



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Among the Lilies.

“Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”—MATTHEW vi. 28, 29.

AMONG THE LILIES.

CHAPTER I.

AMONG THE LILIES.

IF I were to ask, "What are eyes made for?" you would answer, "They are made to look at everything that is beautiful—at the bright stars that shine above us, and the lovely flowers that grow in our garden-beds, the buttercups that peep with such a roguish look out of the green meadows, and the columbine that climbs the rocks in the shady woods."

All these things make us very glad and happy if our hearts are only full of love to God, and therefore we ought to be thankful to our heavenly Father that he has given us eyes, and has created the light,

and made the stars and the flowers to bring so much joy to us.

I write in the opening flower season. The snow that covered the fields during the long winter has passed away. I do not know whether you prefer the snow or the flowers. I remember reading of a boy who, when the meadows put on their new green dress, and the birds came back again and sung their sweet songs, wished that the spring would remain all the year round. But when summer appeared with its pleasant fruits, he wished it were always summer. And then autumn followed, and there were nut-gatherings, and the apples were taken from the orchard into the cellar, and the leaves of the trees, touched by the early frost, had as many colors as the rainbow, and he was so happy that he wished autumn would never leave. Then winter brought the snow, and scattered it over the green fields and made them all white, and the rivers were frozen, and there were bright fires in

the house, and so many pleasures in-doors and out that the boy who had been in love with spring and summer and autumn wished it might always be winter.

Every season brings its own joys; and though you may be very glad that winter is gone and the bright spring days have come again, I am very certain that you are fond of winter, too, and that you were made as happy by the Christmas tree in December as you will be by the roses in June.

God sends the snow as well as the flowers. He sends it to keep the flowers warm during the cold winter days and nights. Did you ever think of this? If not, think of it now. Remember that the flowers will be all the more beautiful because God wrapped their roots so kindly and carefully in the thick mantle of snow that lay so many weeks upon the ground.

In some parts of the world the snow is never seen and the flowers are always blooming, but we have no reason to envy

those who dwell in these warmer regions, for they have only the one blessing, while we have the flowers and the snow too.

Now, as often as you go into the field or the garden these sunny days, I want you to obey the command of Jesus and consider the lilies, and not only the lilies, but the violets and the tulips, and buds and blossoms of every kind; for they are all beautiful, and they all bring the same lessons. Whenever you pick a blade of grass or examine a leaf, you should use not only your eyes, but your thoughts also. That is what the Saviour means. He speaks as if every field and every garden were a school-room in which you are to learn how to be wise and good. And here the gentle flowers are to be your teachers. But though they never frown or scold, they say very serious things, as we shall learn hereafter.

The horse and the ox have eyes with which they can see as well as you, but they cannot consider. The bee looks at the

sweet clover, and the humming-bird, poised by the rapid movement of its wings, thrusts its long, slender bill into lilies and honey-suckles in a very curious way ; but bees and birds can do little more with their eyes than see how to construct their hives and build their nests and gather their food ; they cannot *consider*.

You know by this time that the word "*consider*" means *think, reflect*. If I hold a flower in my hand carelessly, and then throw it carelessly away, I am not doing what the Saviour tells me to do when he says, "Consider the lilies." But if the flower reminds me of my heavenly Father's love, and of the love I owe to him, I am learning in part from my gentle teacher what I ought to learn, I am doing in part what I ought to do, for I am tracing God in the flower, I am tracing the wisdom, power and love that were concerned in its creation.

The first lesson I want you to learn from the lilies is, that we should give thanks to

God for all things beautiful. Whenever you look at the flowers after this, remember the Being who made them; remember his love in giving you eyes to see them and hearts to love both them and him.

But there is another lesson. You are not only to think about the flowers, you are also to consider *how they grow*.

This, I am very sure, has often made you wonder. Take a seed of any kind, and put it in the ground where the rain-drops can moisten it, and the bright, warm sun can shine upon it, and the seed will soon begin to swell, and then the shell that covers it will break, and then a small green leaf will push away the ground and look out into the pleasant light, and then another leaf will grow upon the stem, and this will be followed by another, and the young plant will become taller and taller, until at last a bud will be formed, and that will open into a beautiful flower.

Now, where did that stem, and that flower,

and all these leaves, come from? Why, they all came out of the little seed. Put a grain of corn in the ground, and it will grow and grow until it is taller than you are, and the stalk will produce leaves as long as your arm, and when you come to gather the ears, instead of the single kernel which you put in the ground, you will have five hundred or a thousand kernels. Strange, is it not?

But there are many things stranger than this. Not far from here is an apple tree that has been growing many years, and it is larger round than your body, and almost as tall as the house you live in, and its long crooked branches reach out in every direction, and it bears so many leaves that you could not count them, and more apples in the summer than you could eat through the long winter. It is hard to believe that that great tree, with all its branches and leaves and fruit, was once hidden in a little seed. Yet this is true, for if you plant the seed, the tree will be sure to come out of it. Nor

did the tree fill the whole of the seed, but was stowed away in a part of it, so small that you could not have seen it with your naked eye, and perhaps not with the most powerful microscope. I do not mean that the tree was as large as it is now. It was so small that the point of a needle might have covered it. But from that small beginning in the seed has it come to be what it is.

You now understand in part what Jesus means when he says, "Consider how the lilies grow." Just like the corn, just like the tree, the lilies are hidden in the seed, and when the seed is warmed by the sun and moistened by the rain they come out of it, first showing their green leaves, and then their beautiful bell-shaped flowers. These flowers vary both in size and color. They are sometimes pure white, sometimes deep red and sometimes brilliant yellow. The lily of the valley mentioned in Solomon's Song is not the little flower which we call by that name, but a much larger one that

grows wild in the fields of Palestine. As Jesus, when he was talking, looked upon these fields in which the lilies were blooming in rich abundance, it may be that the white and the red and the golden were all grouped together, and that this lovely blending reminded him of the robes of kings when he said that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Listen now to what else is said of the manner in which the lilies grow. "They toil not, neither do they spin." You know what it is to toil. Toil is hard, wearisome work. And you know what it is to spin. Perhaps you have seen the silk-worm wrapped up in a beautiful case, all made of silk, which comes out of the body of the worm. This silk is very fine—almost as fine as the spider's web—and many threads of it are put together and twisted into one, and these larger threads are woven into a fabric like that of which your dresses are some-

times made. The finest and most costly velvets are formed in this way. Well, the lilies neither toil nor spin, and yet the robes of Solomon, though he was a king, were not as beautiful as they.

Jesus does not mean that the lilies have nothing to do. They are never idle. Through their broad leaves they breathe just as you breathe through your lungs, and by means of their roots they are constantly eating and drinking, or they would not live. But then they do it so silently and gently that you would not think they were doing it at all. They do not fret, and scold, and worry, and act as if everything was going wrong with them when the sky is a little dark or the ground a little dry. They seem to know that God is watching over them; and though they do not know it, they behave as wisely as if they did. If men and women were as full of trust and as full of contentment as the lilies are, they would not have as many wrinkles and cares as they have now.

The *second* lesson I want you to remember is that God takes care of the flowers.

What is the *first* lesson?

We should thank God for all beautiful things.

And what is the *second*?

God takes care of the flowers.

Remember these lessons when you see the flowers grow. Remember that they are talking to you all the while about God. They have not tongues, as you have, but they talk, nevertheless.

Talking is not all done with the tongue. I have seen children again and again talk with their eyes and their looks. When they have been doing right their eyes tell me that they are happy, and when they have been doing wrong, when they have been unkind or disobedient, I can find it out by only looking at them, though they may not say a word. Well, the flowers have their own language, just as your eyes have, and they always speak pleasantly, and kindly,

and wisely, and truthfully. They say there is a God, and that if they are beautiful and sweet he has made them so, and that he watches over them, and causes them to bloom and fill the air with fragrance. You must learn this language, so that you will know what the lilies and the roses are saying to you.

But there are still other lessons that the Saviour wants us to learn—lessons even more important than those I have already mentioned—and the chief one is that *we are to have faith in God*.

When Jesus was preaching to the people on the Mount of Olives he knew that many of them were very much troubled as to what they should eat, and what they should drink, and what they should put on, just as many are troubled now. And he wanted to persuade them that it was foolish and sinful to allow such thoughts to make them unhappy, so he told them of the lilies of the field, that are not tenderly nursed like garden flowers,

and yet grow and flourish, and fill the air with their sweet odors. If God takes care of the lilies, and dresses them so beautifully, he will also take care of the children.

Now, I know that you are not concerned about raiment, because you have faith—faith in your parents, for you are certain that they will provide for you all the clothes you want, so that when the old are wearing out you do not trouble yourselves about the new. Well, then, you are to have this same faith in God, and even a larger, stronger faith, if possible, because he loves you more than any of your earthly friends do, however great their love may be, and does more for you every day than they can possibly do. He has made you, and watches over you when you are asleep and when you are awake. Wherever you are, your heavenly Father is at your side, and puts his arm tenderly around you.

Especially are you to trust God because he can give you a dress that is more beauti-

ful than anything else in the world—more beautiful than the robes of Solomon, more beautiful than the flowers, more beautiful than the sun or the stars or the brightest diamonds. I mean a kind temper, a gentle, loving disposition, the dress that Jesus wore when he was on the earth. You know very well that you are often angry, and unkind, and fretful, and selfish—that you are not always willing to do what your parents and teachers tell you to do, that you are not always careful to make others happy. The Saviour came to take away these feelings which are so wrong and sinful, and to give you his own spirit, which is the spirit of love and gentleness.

If you want this spirit, you must look to Jesus for it, just as you look to your parents for the clothes you wear. You must love him, and then you will trust him. You must trust him, and then you will love him. Love and trust always go together, because they are one and the same. And Jesus

wants you to come to him, and ask him for a new heart, for a loving heart—a heart that will make you love others, and that will make others love you.

I have a book written in the German language that tells about a boy named John Muller who had just such a heart. He was always ready to do anything that would add to the happiness of others. It is a long story, and I cannot therefore repeat it now, but one incident was this: Upon a certain holiday his classmates and himself were going with their teacher on a pleasant excursion to a neighboring mountain; and John, whose father was by no means rich, had worked hard, early and late, for several days, in order to earn money enough to pay his own way. Well, the day came, and a bright and beautiful day it was, and John felt as happy as any boy could feel with the prospect of such a delightful trip before him. But just as he was on the point of starting he learned that one of his schoolfellows, to

whom he was strongly attached, had been severely injured, by the falling of a piece of timber from a new house, as he was walking along the street. And now the question arose in the mind of John whether he ought not to give up all his cherished plans which he had labored so hard to realize. The struggle was a hard one, for even his mother, who was a kind woman, thought the sacrifice too great, and told him he was very foolish to think of it. But John was resolute in doing what he thought right, as all true heroes are, and so, instead of going to the mountain that day, he sat by the bedside of his sick friend, and by words of cheer and deeds of kindness made him forget his pain.

I want to ask you whether you do not think a boy or a girl with a heart like that—a heart like the heart of the loving Saviour—more beautiful than a flower, however beautiful that may be. You would love such a boy or girl, I am sure, more than you

would love a lily or a rose—more than you would love a garden of roses.

The most costly dress of silk or velvet can never hide a bad temper. You have sometimes seen a boy in a new suit look very proud, and strut, and put on airs, as if he were better than other boys. Now, I do not say it is wrong to dress neatly, or even elegantly, but it is very wrong to think that we are better than others because we can afford to wear better clothes. They alone are robed more beautifully than Solomon, more beautifully than the lilies, who have put on Christ, who have his tender, loving heart.

Have faith in God. This is the second lesson I want you to remember.

And there is still another. *You are to grow like the lilies.*

At first they do not promise a great deal. When the young leaves begin to peep out of the ground you would not expect the large, brilliant flowers if you did not know they

were coming, but they keep on reaching higher and higher, and so every day we love them more.

Do you understand what I mean when I say you are to grow like the lilies? I do not mean that you are to become more beautiful in face or form. This is not the chief thing, and without something better it is absolutely nothing. I mean that you are to grow in goodness. You are to become more useful every day, more like the Saviour.

There was once a young girl who loved flowers dearly, and had a small garden where she cultivated the most beautiful with her own hands. So one day toward the end of winter her father brought her a bulb, which looked as much like an onion as anything else, and she placed it in a small pot filled with earth. Before long the earth began to rise, and then green leaves appeared. Emily's care and affection increased as the flower gradually unfolded. She sprinkled it with water, and whenever the sun looked through

the window she placed it where the sunbeams would fall upon it. At length the flower bloomed. Twelve bells had opened at the dawn of morning. They hung suspended between five dark-green leaves. Their color was red like the sky at the rising of the sun, and a sweet fragrance surrounded them. Emily had never conceived such magnificence. Her joy was noiseless and without words. But her heart was full of strong emotions, for she loved the Saviour more than all things else, and she wanted to grow more and more into his likeness; and when her father at that moment entered the room she clasped him in her arms, and whispered, "Oh, my father, may I also bloom as beautiful as this flower!"

The fourth lesson I want you to learn is that we are to grow in goodness.

Whenever you look now at the beautiful things that are seen in fields and gardens, be thankful to your heavenly Father who has made them all, and remember that he

takes care of them and of you, and that therefore you should trust and love him, and that you should become every day more like Jesus, who was called the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley because he was so gentle and pure.

“There is a lesson in each flower,
A story in each stream and bower;
In every herb on which you tread
Are written words which, rightly read,
Will lead you from earth’s fragrant sod
To hope, and holiness, and God.”



With the Birds.

“ Behold the fowls of the air ; for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they ? ”—*MATT. vi. 26.*

CHAPTER II.

WITH THE BIRDS.

WHEN Jesus speaks of "the fowls of the air," he means the birds. It is the same as if he had said, "Behold the birds, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns."

But why are the birds called the fowls of the air? Because they have wings, and can fly in the air far above the earth until each one seems like a little speck in the sky, and then higher still until they are out of sight, and when it rains they can fly above the clouds, and sail about in the bright sunshine while the raindrops are falling thick and fast on the earth.

You have often watched the birds soaring away beyond the trees and beyond the moun-

tain-tops, and you have admired their graceful movements, now going upward by means of the rapid motion of their wings, and then for a moment remaining perfectly still, as if perched upon the wind, and then darting down so swiftly as to make you hold your breath for fear of their dashing against the ground, and when your eyes were wide open with concern, suddenly poisoning themselves, and sailing upward again with such a direct aim for the sun, as if they were making a railway of the sunbeams.

You have, perhaps, often wished for wings, that, like the birds, you might fly far above the trees and the storms. But we can hardly call that a wise wish, because it is wishing that God had made you different from what you are. Even in this respect you are better than the birds—better without wings than you would be with them. We must be very careful that in our wishes we do not find fault with God's mode of doing things. He has made you to walk and to run, and

not to fly. Nor is there anything more beautiful than a happy child walking over the fields, or along the streams, gathering the early flowers of spring, or trundling a hoop along the grassy road, picking up health and strength and a good appetite at every step. What can be more graceful than a deer running through the forest, or a horse galloping in the pasture with head erect, and nostrils dilated, and eyes full of fire? But all this grace would vanish if they had wings, and were trying to play their pranks in the air.

David, the king of Israel, once said, "Oh that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest." But he meant by this only to express his great grief, and his anxiety to be far away from all that troubled him. David was a shepherd before he became a king, and he was far happier when a boy, watching his father's sheep in the pastures round Bethlehem, than when he sat upon a throne. A shepherd's staff is

often better than a crown. So David found it, for his son Absalom wanted his crown, and came against him with an army of more than twenty thousand men, and compelled him to leave his splendid palace at Jerusalem; and then it was, when a wanderer and a fugitive in the desert, and when it seemed as if his kingdom was about to be wrested from him by the ingratitude of his own son, that as "a timid dove, chased by the tempest, returns to her window, so David desired to find a refuge from the rising storm."

But wings would not allow any one to escape from trouble if there were nothing else. I read of a boy not long ago who stole some money, and then made his escape on a railroad train, which travels almost as fast as a bird. But the lightning goes faster, and so they sent the notice of his crime and flight along the wire of the telegraph, and when the train stopped men were looking for him, and laid their hands upon him. And if the men had not been there, God

and his own conscience would have been. When you are disobedient or unkind, when you do or say anything that you know to be wrong, and thus make yourself unhappy, though you had wings you would not be able to fly away from yourself; you would not be able to fly away from God, for wherever you are his eye is upon you.

Have you ever thought of the great difference there is in different animals, so that some are made to fly, and others to walk, and others to crawl, some to live where it is always cold, and others to live where it is always hot? There is the camel, with his queer, cushioned feet, that spread out like a very soft India-rubber ball whenever they press upon the loose sands of the desert, and his large pouch in which he carries water enough to last him fourteen days, because he has to travel where water is very scarce. And there is the reindeer, who needs very little food, and whom God has made to live at the extreme North, where but

little food grows. So the birds are very differently constructed from other animals, or they would not be able to fly even with the help of wings.

Now, I want you to find out, if you do not already know, why it is that a man could not fly if he had wings, and what the bird has in addition to its wings that gives it this power of flying.

It is better for you to find out some things yourselves than to be told all about them. Work always pays—I mean good work, work that is right. It makes the head and the heart strong, as well as the hands. If you have a puzzling sum in arithmetic, or any other puzzle connected with your daily studies, you had better work it out yourself than ask your teacher or any one else to do it for you. If you have never tried it, you don't know how happy it will make you feel to conquer difficulties.

Now, then, after this little stroll, let us come back to our bird text. You remember

how it reads, nor have you forgotten what Jesus says about the lilies. The birds and the flowers always come and go together. When you hear the robin chirping his first cautious notes in the early spring, you may see the little violet looking timidly out of the ground, and when the trees are in full bloom, and the flowers are no longer afraid of frost and snow, the birds sing loud and merrily. They seem to know that with buds and blossoms the summer has fairly come. So our Saviour has put the birds and flowers near each other in the gospel, and as he sent us to school to the lilies, where we learned, I trust, some very pleasant and useful lessons, so here he sends us to school to the birds. I doubt not we shall find them quite as pleasant and gentle teachers as the flowers.

All the talk we have had thus far has been *on our way* to the school-room. Let us imagine ourselves, then, to be seated where the grass is growing at our feet, and where

the trees are lifting their strong branches and their beautiful green tops all around us. It is at the break of day. We have left our beds to listen to the singing of the birds, for they are early risers, and if we want to hear some of their sweetest notes, we must be up as early as they. Did you not hear a bird at your window the other morning just as the day began to dawn? Beautiful sight—come and see it—come and see it—beautiful sight—it seemed to say, or rather sing, as the sun rose in all his splendor, and first lighted the distant hill-tops, and then flung his bright, loving rays into the valleys. And a beautiful sight it is thus to sit or stand when the night is passing away, and watch the first sunbeams as they come trooping over the hills and light laughingly upon leaves and branches, and nestle among the flowers, and make the dewdrops sparkle, so that the grass seems bespangled with diamonds. Beautiful is the sight truly, filling the heart with gladness.

I suppose you have often heard these two lines :

“Early to bed and early to rise
Make a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”

Now, if this is good for the man, it must be equally good for the boy or the girl. And I am inclined to think that all this is true. Health certainly comes from early rising, but then the “early to bed” must go along with it. Many young persons, as well as some who are older, keep very late hours, and thus injure their health, if they do not destroy it. Of all the birds the owl is the only one, as far as I know, who turns day into night; and as God has made him so, it is not his fault. The rest are all early risers. And there is little sickness among them—so little that they need no doctor, save when some wicked, thoughtless boy flings a stone and breaks a leg or a wing. So we may safely put it down as one of the lessons they teach :

“Up in the morning, up, my child,
Hear the bird-notes, sweet and wild;
See the dew-drops, every one
Glistening in the sun.”

But the great lesson of our text is *confidence in God*.

The birds sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them.

What does this mean? I want you to understand these words, and I want to be very sure that you do not *misunderstand* them. Does Jesus say here that the birds do nothing? No. He simply tells us what they do not do. They do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns. They are as busy as the bees that treasure up their honey. They are as busy as the squirrels that hide away their nuts. But it is because they do not do these things that they seem so full of trust in God. They are not only busy, they are also useful. If they did nothing but sing, they would have a claim

upon us for all they eat. When Jenny Lind was in this country she received a hundred thousand dollars for her singing—and a wonderful singer she was—but her most ardent admirers could utter no higher praise than to call her a nightingale, and say of her most tender and melting notes that they were bird-like. But the birds that sing most sweetly, and ask no money for it, do much more than sing, while those who only *caw* have busy lives and perform many services for man.

The single matter of nest-building requires no little time and labor. Let us look at it a little.

When the robins and other birds that have been away all winter return to their Northern homes, it is that they may lay their eggs and hatch and rear their young. But first a place must be prepared in which all this is to be done. And so the materials are gathered—of mud or sticks or straw, according to the style of building which each bird

likes best, with a soft lining, perhaps, of feathers or something else.

Many of these bird-houses are curious enough. Sometimes the outside is made of "long, tough grass that will bend without breaking, and this grass is knit or sewed through and through in a thousand directions, just as if done with a needle." The bird that builds in this manner is called the orchard starling, and it usually hangs its nest on the branch of an apple tree. Then "there is another most beautiful little bird, which is called the tailor-bird because it sews so well. It first picks out a plant with large leaves, then it gathers cotton from the shrub, and with the help of its fine long bill and slender little feet it spins this cotton into a thread, and then, using its bill for a needle, it will sew these large leaves together to hide its nest, and sew them very neatly, too." Then, again, these birds have to educate their children—teach them how to fly, and prepare them to take care of

themselves, and while all this is going on have to seek their food and bring it to the nests, where the young ones are waiting for it with open mouths.

From all this we learn that the birds are not idle, though they neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns.

We learn also the goodness of our heavenly Father, who teaches them thus to work and makes them happy in working. The birds do not encourage idleness, and therefore are useful in setting us an example of constant, cheerful industry. So they do two things at least, either of which would entitle them to a living—they cheer us with their music, and they teach us to be happy in our work.

Before I leave this matter of nest-building I want to say that the birds ought to be protected in their rights. In this country, and in some other countries, every man's house is said to be his castle, so that neither president, nor king, nor any other man, can enter

it lawfully without the owner's leave. And I contend here that the birds have rights too—rights of property which every boy and every girl should respect. The houses they build are their own. If all this is true, then one of the meanest of all mean actions is the robbing of a bird's nest.

Last spring a robin selected as the place of his residence a tree in my garden. I watched the nest with great interest, fearing that some accident or wrong would befall it. All went on well for a while, but one day I found the nest broken and the young birds wounded and fluttering on the ground. Whether it was an idle wind or an idle boy that did the mischief, I cannot say, but it made me feel very sad. The parent birds were very sad too, for they flew in circles around their injured little ones, and made a plaintive noise that sounded very much like weeping. Nor was that all. The first robin I saw this spring I believe to have been one of the pair whose nest was disturbed last

summer. I believe this because, while I stood near him, smiling my thanks for his pleasant chirping and trying to let him know, as best I could, that I was glad to see him, he looked at me very suspiciously, first with one eye and then with the other, and in such a peculiar way that I really fear he took me for the one who had tampered with his nest.

It is not pleasant to be thought mean and cowardly even by a bird, and I wish I were only sure it was an idle wind that placed me in these uncomfortable circumstances.

Stand up for the birds, boys—stand up for the birds. “The swallow will fly into a burning building to rescue its young. The timid lark presents itself to the fowler to divert him from her nest.” Do not be cowardly when they are so brave. Do not take a mean advantage of their weakness. But remember that you are to protect the weak—to stand by them and help them, whether they be boys or birds.

When the birds seem frightened at your presence, as they will be if you happen to be near their young, be sure to walk away at once, and thus say, as plainly as actions can say,

“Go home where your mate and your little ones dwell;
Though I know where they are, yet I never will tell;
Nobody shall injure that leaf-covered nest,
For sacred to me is the place of your rest.”

But nest-building is not the only employment in which birds are active, neither is singing the only service they perform for man.

They also destroy innumerable insects and worms which would otherwise eat up the crops, so that the harvests would be far less bountiful than they are now. Thus they are the means of saving millions of dollars in this way every year. It may be that, if it were not for the birds, we should have nothing to eat. Even the crow is said to be the farmer's friend, though supposed by many to be a most mischievous enemy,

for if he pulls up the corn, it is with the honest intention of getting hold of the grub that lies at the root.

In the city of Philadelphia there are several fine parks filled with large, beautiful trees, and in the shade of these trees the children are allowed to play during the spring and summer, and in some of these parks there are beautiful fountains, and miniature rainbows span these fountains whenever the sun shines brightly. But for a few years past the children have been driven out of these pleasant play-grounds by the worms. And how do you suppose it happened? Why, squirrels were allowed to come into the parks, and for a while this was delightful, for they became quite tame, and the children bought nuts for them, and gave them as many as they could eat, and were much amused to see them sit, as squirrels only can, with their bushy tails curved gracefully. But the squirrels proved unfriendly to the birds, and drove them away

by destroying their nests. Then the worms came and stripped the trees of their leaves, and let themselves down from the bare branches about halfway to the ground, hanging upon the webs they had spun, until there was neither comfort nor beauty in the parks any longer. The only remedy for all this was to send the squirrels away, thus inviting the birds back again, and so save the foliage of the trees.

This shows what ravages the worms would commit all over the world if it were not for the birds.

I read a story the other day which may be regarded as a sort of parable, showing how much we are indebted often to the inferior creatures.

“A little sparrow lighted upon a trough where a horse was feeding. ‘Horsie,’ said the little sparrow, timidly, ‘let me pick a little, only a grain or two, and you will still have enough.’

“‘Help yourself,’ said the horse to the

sparrow—‘help yourself; there’s enough for both you and me.’

“And so they ate together, and neither the one nor the other suffered from hunger; and when the warm sunshine came, and swarms of flies began buzzing around, the sparrow killed them by hundreds, and so the horse was well paid.”

Don’t grudge the birds their living, for they more than pay for all they get. Not only do they save the orchards and the grain-fields from destructive insects, but they are known to have performed special services that have been of great advantage to individual men or to whole families. Here is one story that claims to be true.

“In a village near Warsaw, the capital of the kingdom of Poland, lived a pious German peasant whose name was Dobry. Without his fault, he had fallen into arrears with his rent. It was a cold winter evening, and the next day he was to be turned out with all his family, when, as they sat there in

sorrow, the church bell pealed for evening prayer, and Dobry kneeled down with his family around him. And then they sang,

“Commit thou all thy griefs
And ways into His hands.”

And as they were singing the lines,

“When thou wouldst all our need supply,
Who, who shall stay thy hand?”

there was a knock at the window. It was the knock of an old friend, *a raven*, that Dobry's grandfather had tamed, and then set at liberty. Dobry opened the window, and the raven hopped in, and in his bill there was a ring set with precious stones. Dobry brought the ring to his minister, who saw at once by the crest that it belonged to King Stanislaus. The minister took it to the king and related the story, and the king sent for Dobry, and rewarded him, so that he was no more in need, and the next year built him a new house, and gave him cattle from his own stall, and over the house-door

there is an iron tablet whereon is carved a raven with a ring in his beak, and underneath, this verse :

“Thou everywhere hast sway,
And all things serve thy might;
Each act of thine is a bright, pure ray,
Thy path, unsullied light.”

You remember that Noah sent first a raven and then a dove from the ark, after the flood, and that he sent the dove the second time, when it brought back an olive-twig as a sign that the waters were fast settling away. And when Elijah the prophet hid himself from Ahab near a small stream that runs into the Jordan, God said : “I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there,” “and the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening.”

I have told you that the great lesson of our text is confidence in God. Do you know what I mean by that? The birds neither sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and

yet they are just as happy as if they did, because God takes care of them. They do all they can, and God does the rest. If, then, we trust God as the birds do, we shall be as happy as they.

But how are we to trust him? We are to do all he tells us to do. There can be no trust without obedience. When you trust your parents you believe all their words to be true and right, and you thus believe because you love them, and because you know they love you. When you trust God you believe all his words to be true and right, and you are ready to do all he requires. But what does he require? He requires you to love him, and to love Jesus, his own dear Son, who died for you.

There is more than one way in which you may find out whether you love God. If you love him thus, you will love one another, you will speak kind, loving words one to another. You will guard against anger, and all other feelings that are wrong. You

will think of God, and thank him when the day begins and when it ends, at your work and at your play. Some one has written :

“ When morning dawns with radiant light,
Chasing the shadows of the night,
Waking to life each warbling bird,
Then let our cheerful hymns be heard;
When evening comes with softened beam,
Let praise be still our grateful theme.”

So should you praise God morning and evening, and pray to him also—praise him for watching over you during the night—praise him for giving you such kind, loving friends, and so many of them—praise him for your daily bread, and the pleasant sunshine, and the sight of the flowers, and the songs of the birds, and, above all, for his own dear Son who died to save you. You should pray to your Father in heaven, as soon as you wake in the morning, to preserve you from danger, and to keep you from sin, and enable you to show your love to him all the day long.

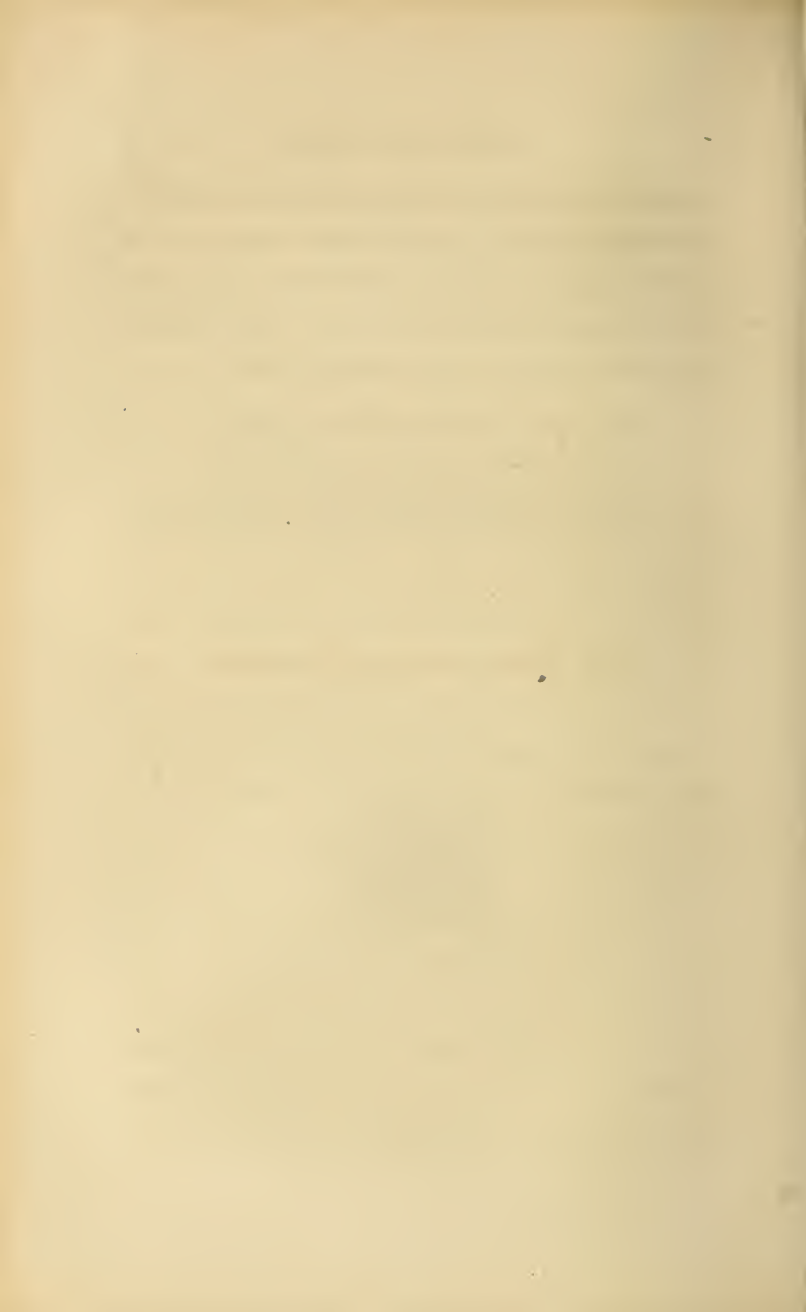
And now I want to say a few words about the Saviour of whom you have heard so much, and whom some of you already love. I want you all to love him, because he is the very best Friend you have. He can help you and make you happy when no other friend can.

You have sometimes been out when the storm was coming. You have seen the leaves and the dust blown by the strong wind, and the frightened birds flying to their nests or seeking shelter in the clefts of the rocks. You have been frightened, I am sure—have been made unhappy more than once by your sins. You have felt as though you wanted some place to which you might flee from your own wicked heart. Now, Jesus calls himself “a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.” When you are in trouble, when you are afraid, when you are tempted, he says, “Come to me.” Jesus alone can teach your soul to fly above all temptations. As the hen gathers her

chickens under her wings when the hawk is making ready to carry them away, so he will hide you in the shadow of his power if you put your trust in him. Will you not all take him for your Saviour now?

“Only think of that heaven of glory and love
Which to penitent sinners is promised above,
And try, like the joyful young bird, to arise,
On the pure wings of faith, to your home in the skies.”





The Vine and the Branches.

"I am the vine, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."—JOHN xv. 5-8.

CHAPTER III.

THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES.

THE vine is among the most beautiful of all the beautiful things that God has caused to grow upon the earth. Sometimes you see it in the woods climbing the trees, and reaching from branch to branch, until it forms a thick canopy of leaves overhead, and you can sit beneath it and read or play, protected from the hot rays of the sun. Then what luscious fruit it bears!—pleasant to the eye and delicious to the taste.

The first that we hear of the vine in the Bible is in connection with Noah. It is probable that he planted a vineyard after he left the ark, and then he expressed the juice from the grapes, and allowed it to stand until it fermented and became strong drink, and made him drunk. Had Noah

only eaten the grapes he would have remained sober, as every one should. Drunkenness is a very great as well as a very needless sin. You will not commit it unless you choose. You can guard against it just as easily as not. How beautiful the clear, bright water looks, trickling down the mountain and over the rocks on a warm summer's day! And when you are thirsty, how refreshing it is to quench your thirst with the cool drops that seem to laugh as they leap over the stones, and to say, as they run among the mosses and the pebbles, to every boy and every girl who stoops to catch them as they go, "Drink, drink! there's no intoxication here; there's nothing but strength, nothing but beauty, nothing but joy, in the bright, pure water." Somebody has written, and many children have sung:

"Touch not the wine, though brightly it shine,
When nature to man has given
A gift so sweet, his wants to meet,
As the showers that drop from heaven.

“Then drink your fill of the grateful rill,
 . Touch not the cup of sorrow ;
Though it shine to-night in its gleaming light,
 ’Twill sting thee on the morrow.”

It was from the valley of Eshcol, in Judea, that the spies whom Moses sent brought a cluster of grapes so large that it was carried on a pole which rested upon the men's shoulders. Vineyards, we are told, abound there more than in any other part of Palestine. You may see them also in Germany and France and Italy, where many persons are employed in trimming and training the vines and gathering the fruit. They seem to flourish best upon the hill-slopes, and these are often arranged in terraces or steps, each supported by a stone wall, to which the vines cling, and along which they grow.

This graceful plant, with its rich, abounding fruit, deserves to be studied, not only for its own sake, but also because we may learn much from it that we should be most con-

cerned to know, just as we may learn, and I trust have learned, from the flowers and the birds.

One thing we learn from it is *the care which God takes of his own people*, of those who love him, among whom we may count many of the young, and the very young, I am glad to know. Those whom God loves are the Church, and he calls the Church a vine of his own planting, which he causes to grow and flourish, and he also calls it a vineyard fenced in by his own power.

Jesus says, "I am the vine; ye are the branches." And now, leaving everything else, we will endeavor to find out what these words mean.

To whom were these words spoken? They were spoken to the disciples of Christ—that is, to his scholars, for the word "disciples" means "scholars," and you remember that Christ was a teacher sent from God. He can teach us what no one else can. He is the only one who can tell us what we must

do to be saved. He is the only one who can tell us how to get rid of our wicked thoughts, and how to love and do what is right. If you are willing to learn of him, if you are willing to be a scholar in the school of Christ, he says to you, "I am the vine," and he calls you the branches.

In these words, "I am the vine; ye are the branches," Christ speaks of two things: he speaks of the *privilege* and the *duty* of those who are united to him.

What is meant by *privilege*? And what is meant by *duty*?

I will try to answer these questions in such a way as to make them very plain.

If we were at this moment standing alongside of a vine laden with grapes, I think I could easily make you understand what "privilege" and "duty" are. First I would point you to the branch, and tell you to notice how it is united to the vine, so that it receives from the vine all the sap that enables it to live and produce leaves and

fruit, and that union I would call *privilege*. Then I would point to the leaves and fruit as the result of the union, and would call them *duty*.

It is a privilege to be united to Christ—it is a great honor, the greatest honor we can have. Sometimes you are at the head of your class in school, because in your studies you have done better than all the rest; but that honor, great as it is, is not to be compared with the honor of being united to Christ.

Now the question comes, What is meant by being united to Christ?

To be united to Christ is to be like him in your desires, in your tempers; it is to have the same nature, just as the branch has the nature of the vine; it is to be joined to him by faith, believing in him and clinging to him.

That the branch has the nature of the vine can easily be proved. If you take a scion from an apple tree and graft it upon a

quince tree, it will not bear quinces, but apples. Though the root of the quince furnishes the sap that makes the scion grow, the scion remains true to itself, true to its own nature: it will be only what God made it.

So you may put the Christian anywhere, and he will be a Christian still. When he is surrounded by temptations, he will show that he is united to Christ by resisting them all, and the purity of his heart and life will only shine the brighter because he is tempted.

Every one is tempted more or less. In a world like this, where there are so many who do not love God, and where our own hearts are not what they ought to be, it cannot be otherwise. Even Christ, you remember, was tempted. But then he answered the tempter in words that drove him away. So will you, if you are united to Christ as the branch is united to the vine. That is the reason why I would trust any boy or girl who loves the Saviour, in any company into which he may be brought.

Of course you will not associate of your own accord with those who hate God, because that would be rushing into temptation, which would be very wrong. But in school and elsewhere you are continually meeting those who are ill-natured and quarrelsome and speak wicked words, and God permits all this that you may show in better tempers and in mild and loving words what is meant by being branches of the true vine. That is a part of your work in the world. That is the fruit you are to bear. You are always to show in your actions and words that you love the Saviour. *That* you will do, I am sure, if you love him. You will not be able to do anything else. It will be just as natural for you as it is for the vine-branches to bear grapes. The wicked will not prevail upon you to do wrong; they will only make you more firm in doing right.

Sometimes, you know, when a bud or cutting is separated from the tree that produced it, and united to another that dwarfs

the branches and keeps them very low and short, it bears even larger and finer fruit than it would have borne if it had remained on the parent tree, and in the fine, luscious pears or apples that grow out of it it seems to say, "You cannot make me so little as to prevent me from showing what I am."

It will be with you as with the dwarfed tree, and as with the boy of whom Charlotte Elizabeth tells us. This boy's name was Jack, and he could neither hear nor speak: he was deaf and dumb. But Jack had a bright mind that grew brighter every day, and he had the Holy Spirit in his heart.

In the Sunday-school established by the lady whose name I have mentioned, and which was composed of thirty-two robust, boisterous fellows from nine to seventeen years old, Jack was made a sort of monitor. Seated in a large chair, Jack kept strict watch over the party, and when he noticed any wrong conduct, he expressed the punishment he thought it deserved by pulling his

own ear, or striking his own face, with a knowing nod at the offender. But if he saw an approach to levity over the word of God, his manner wholly changed. Tears filled his eyes, he looked all grief and entreaty, and the words, "God sees," were earnestly spelled on his uplifted hands. No one could stand the appeal, and very rarely had he occasion to make it. I do not think the fruits of piety in Jack's life would have appeared half as large and beautiful if he had not been surrounded by these thoughtless companions.

You understand now what I mean when I say that being united to Christ is having the same nature—is being and doing just what Christ would be and do if he were on the earth now. If you have the nature of Christ, you will love God and love the truth; you will obey your parents, and be kind to one another, and do all the good you can.

I do not mean that you must never laugh

or play, because you can do both and yet be united to Christ. There are times when it would be very wrong to laugh or play. It is wrong to play on the Sabbath as we are allowed to play on weekdays. And it is wrong to laugh at sin. But it is not wrong to be happy in loving God, and the more you love God, the more closely will you be united to Christ, and the happier will you be, and laughter flows out of happiness just as naturally as the juice flows out of the grapes.

There are some people who think that Jesus never smiled during his whole earthly life. But I am not one of the people who think so, for then he would not have been in all things like unto us, only without sin. He had more reason to smile without sin than we have with sin. I do not believe that when he went with his mother to the wedding in Capernaum he looked very sad, and made others feel so. Nor do I think that in those loving talks he so often had

with his dear friends in Bethany he seemed always overwhelmed with sorrow. You remember he said once, "When ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance." The more you resemble the Saviour, the more cheerful will you have reason to be. If you are not like Christ, then you have no reason to be cheerful. I confess that I do not like to see wicked boys and girls laugh, because it looks as if they were trying to be happy without loving God.

There is still another thing I want to say here. If you are united to Christ as the branch is united to the vine, then I hope you will always remain little children, even when you become men and women, in a cheerful freedom from all care. Some think it a great misfortune that old heads cannot be put upon young shoulders, but I think it a great misfortune that heads or hearts ever become old, in the sense of being careful and troubled about things that ought not to trouble us.

Again, *we become like Christ by faith.* You must believe in him or you cannot resemble him. You must believe in him as your Saviour—must believe that he died for you, and that he alone, by his Spirit, can make you happy and useful. Faith is the tie that binds us to Christ, very much as it binds you to your father and mother, and to the friends you love most. You love them *because you believe* in them—because you can trust them in all things, and feel in your heart that they are ready to make every sacrifice they can make for your good. And your faith is strong just in proportion to your dependence upon them. If, for example, you were walking out in a very dark night where you would be afraid to walk alone, and your father had your hand in his, your faith would be stronger than if the sun were shining brightly and you could see to walk alone.

Now, your faith in Christ depends upon your feeling that you cannot walk through

this world of sin and temptation without his guidance—that if he does not lead you, you will fall into sin at every step—that if he had not suffered and died for you, there would be no forgiveness. When you believe in Christ you cling to him, just as you cling to your mother in the hour of sickness, or just as the branch clings to the vine. The branch, you know, is nothing without the vine; it cannot live without the vine; and therefore it holds on to the vine so firmly. When the wind blows, and the storm scatters the leaves, the branch still clings to the vine, even when all the leaves have been torn away and lie withered on the ground. So, if you believe in Christ, you will hold on to him, though you may have to part with everything else.

Let me tell you here a story about another Jack, whose experience shows very truthfully what faith in Christ is. This Jack was a poor fellow who lived in an

English village, and earned his daily bread by selling a few pins and needles, and such like. He had not wit enough to do much else than be always drunk, which requires no wit at all. In going along the street one day he heard a poor woman singing these very simple words :

“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
But Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

Jack thought that was a pleasant little rhyme, and so he began to say it to himself, and it pleased God to impress it not only on his memory, but on his conscience, so that he became a changed man. He gave up his swearing and his drunkenness, and every one could see that there was something going on in his heart different from what he had ever felt before. At length he thought Jesus had chosen him to be a disciple, and he came to the minister and asked whether he could be received into the Church. “Friend John, what is your experience?”

asked the minister. "I haven't any, sir," was the answer. "All I know is, that

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my all in all.'

Then an old deacon said to him, "Friend John, this is not enough. Come, now, don't you ever have any doubts and fears?" "No," said John, "I cannot doubt that

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,'
for I know that I am; and I dare not doubt that

'Jesus Christ is my all in all,'
because he has said it, and it would be wrong to doubt what he says." "But there are times," continued the deacon, "when my evidences are very bright, and I feel that I am getting rich in grace, and at other times I lose my evidences, and feel that I have gone back in the divine life." "I cannot go back, sir," said John, "and I cannot lose anything, for

'I'm a poor sinner, and nothing at all,'
and no one can take anything from me, for

‘Jesus Christ is my all in all,’

and so I am never richer and never poorer.”

Afterward this poor man was noted for being one of the happiest Christians in the Church, and as long as he lived his song was—

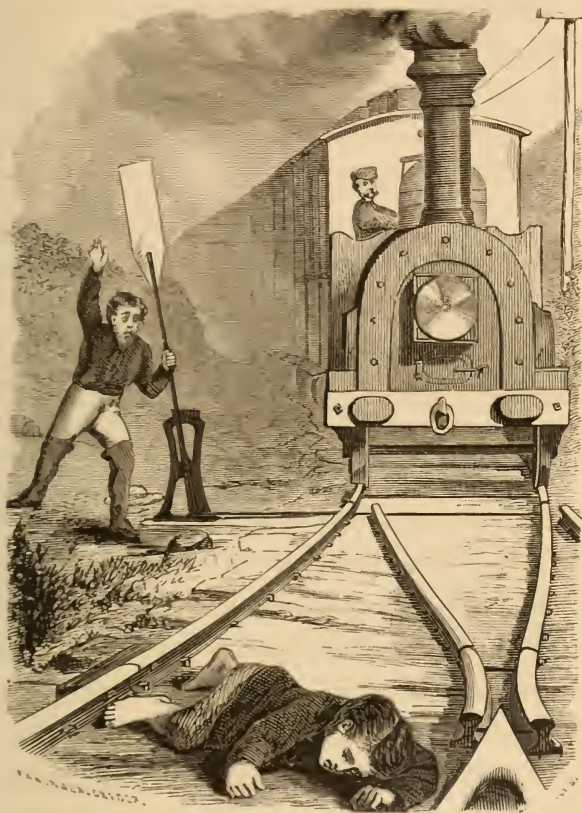
“I’m a poor sinner, and nothing at all,
And Jesus Christ is my all in all.”

So if you are united to Christ, you will think everything of him and nothing of yourself. This is faith.

But, then, this faith will enable you to do more than sing, and more than feel your own weakness. It will enable you to obey Christ very promptly, just as the branch may be said to obey the vine in bearing the sap it furnishes to the remotest twig and leaf. You will stand and listen eagerly to the voice of the Saviour, as the prophet Samuel, when he was a child, listened to the Lord. At first he did not know who it was that spoke to him, but as soon as he knew it was the Lord he cried out, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” I have sometimes seen

children run as if they could not go fast enough when they were told to do this thing or the other. Then I have seen them hesitate and feel reluctant, as if they wanted to have their own way. If you really believe in Christ, if you believe that he tells the truth in every word he utters, and that he asks you to do only what is right and what is best for yourself, you will run in the way of his commandments. This you will do, because Christ is everything to you, your best friend, your dear Redeemer, your all in all.

Have you ever heard the story about the switch-tender's boy? A switch-tender in Prussia was just going to move the rail, in order to put a coming train of cars on a side track, when he caught sight of his little son playing on the track. The engine was in sight, and he had not a moment to spare. He might jump and save his child, but he could not do that and turn the switch in time, and if the switch were not turned,



The Switch Tender's Boy.

the oncoming train would meet another train and a terrible crash take place. The safety of hundreds of lives depended upon his fidelity. What could he do? What *did* he do? "Lie down! lie down!" he called, with a loud, quick voice, to the child, and seizing the switch, the train passed safely on its proper track.

Did the heavy train run over the little boy? Was he killed? Was he crushed to pieces?

No, for he did just what his father told him, and did it instantly. He fell flat between the rails, and the cars went high over his head, and when the anxious father sprang to the spot, there he was alive and well; not a hair was touched. It was his quick obedience, you see, that saved his life. He did not stop a minute. Even a moment's hesitation would have been death to him.

That boy believed in his father.

Oh how happy it would make me, how

far happier it would make yourselves, if you all thus believed in Christ! Some of you do believe. And some of you, it may be, are afraid you are too small to believe. But then you must remember that the vine has little branches as well as large ones. And, indeed, in grafting, it would be much more difficult to make the rough old twigs grow than the young and tender ones. I am very certain that there is reason to have strong hope of the young twigs that are grafted upon Christ. You understand what I mean? I mean that all the children who read these words may become Christians now, and that the longer they wait the harder it will be for them. I mean that they will grow into Christ more easily now—will become more easily like him than after they are hardened in sin.

But you still say you are not strong, and ask, "If older people think they cannot bear the burden Christ would put upon them, how can I?"

All I have to say to this is, Christ will bear you, and your burden too, if you will let him. He always does, just as the vine bears the burdens that hang upon the branches. When you look at a vine, do you think the branches carry the grapes? If you do, you are mistaken. That is, they do not carry them by means of their own strength. They receive all their strength from the vine, and they receive just as much as they need. If a branch has ten bunches of grapes, the vine enables it to carry ten; and if another branch receives only strength enough to carry one bunch, the vine puts only one upon it. So Jesus says to you, "As thy days so shall thy strength be"—that is, you shall have as much strength every day as you need. If you meet one temptation, you shall have strength enough to overcome one, and if you meet ten, you shall have strength enough to overcome ten, just as long as you live. Many people do not believe that, and therefore they will not trust

the Saviour, but I want you to believe it and to act upon it.

There was a little boy in a Christian family near Amoy, China, the youngest of three children, who asked his father to allow him to unite with the church. But he was told that he was too young, that he might fall back if he professed his love for the Saviour when he was such a little boy. What do you suppose the boy said to this? Why, he made the touching reply :

“Jesus has promised to carry the lambs in his arms, and as I am only a little boy, it will be easier for Jesus to carry me.”

What a strong faith he had! It was a faith that moved the heart of his father. And now the whole family of which this child is the youngest member, the father, mother and three sons, all belong to the mission church at Amoy.

Jesus, I say again, will bear you and your burdens if you will only let him.

The other day I saw the young branches

of a vigorous vine full of delicate blossoms, and they were very, very beautiful, and these blossoms were the beginnings of the grapes that are to come ; but they did not owe their beauty to the coming grapes, they were beautiful in themselves, and they will continue beautiful as they change from blossoms into fruit, and as the fruit grows larger and larger into finished, transparent ripeness. Then these blossoms were all hung on short, slender, graceful stems which will grow longer and stouter until they are able to hold the ripened fruit. So right beginnings, though they may be very small, are quite as beautiful and quite as important as right endings, though they may be very large.

Jesus loves to see the blossoms of faith in the hearts of children. As the true vine, he loves the tender branches. He loves to have the children serve him. Oh how tenderly he treated them when he was on the earth !—even took them in his arms and blessed them. You sometimes sing :

“I wish that his hands had been placed on my head,
That his arm had been thrown around me,
And that I might have seen his kind face when he said,
Let the little ones come unto me.”

But if you mean all this, you can have his love in your heart, and that is better even than to have his hand on your head.

You are young now, and think you can do but little, yet you can do all Christ wants you to do. He don't ask you to bear the grapes yet—only the blossoms. But then that is a great deal, for without the blossoms there can be no fruit.

“Ah! won't you come to Jesus while you're young?”

—so that he may say of you even now, this very hour, this very moment, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.”



How to Build.

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“ Which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it ?”—

LUKE xiv. 28.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW TO BUILD.

I SUPPOSE you all know what a tower is. Very many years ago, not long after the flood, the attempt was made to build one, but that attempt failed altogether, for God himself interfered, and so confounded the language of the workmen that they could not understand one another, and were compelled to leave the work unfinished.

The tower alluded to by our Saviour was probably a fine, large mansion with a tower attached to it. But it matters very little what it was, for Jesus is not talking so much about the building as about the cost. He wants to say to us all, that before we begin to build we should be very sure that we have money enough wherewith to finish.

Suppose you had five dollars in your

pocket, and were to think that you would like to have a house of your own to live in, and were to engage carpenters and masons to build your house, and at the end of the first day should find that you had not money enough to pay the men who were digging the cellar for one day's work, you would feel very foolish of course. Though it might not be very kind or friendly, every one would be sure to laugh at you.

Each one of you is continually building: if not a tower or a house, then you are building something else. The other day I saw two boys fighting. They were building a very bad temper—one that would be sure to let in the storm. And then I saw a little girl carry a piece of money to a poor old man who hadn't clothes enough on to keep him warm, for it was a very cold day, and she was building a kind disposition that would always be full of sunshine.

Now, in building, we are always to count the cost, not only as to whether we have

enough to finish with, but whether the work will be worth anything when it is finished. There are some things that cost too much and do not pay.

If you are selfish and do not care to make others happy, if you always eat your cake in a corner for fear a brother or a sister might look at it longingly, if you want the best of everything, you are paying entirely too much for what you get. You are paying all the pleasure it would bring to see others smile upon you and have others love you.

A farmer once brought home five peaches from the city, the finest that were to be found. This was the first time his children had seen any fruit of the kind. So they admired and greatly rejoiced over what they called the beautiful apples with red cheeks. The farmer gave one to each of his four sons, and the fifth to their mother. And when evening came, just as the children were about to retire to sleep, this kind father in-

quired, "Well, boys, how did the apples taste?"

"Mine was excellent, dear father," said the eldest. "I have carefully preserved the seed, and intend to raise a tree for myself."

"Bravo!" said his father. "It is good husbandry to provide for the future, and just what a farmer ought to do."

"I ate mine," said the youngest, "and threw away the stone, and mother gave me half of hers. Oh, that tasted very sweet, and melted in my mouth."

"You," said the father, "have acted in a natural and child-like manner, but not very prudently. There is still room in your life for a great deal of wisdom."

Then the second said, "I picked up the stone that brother threw away, and cracked it open. It contained a kernel that tasted as sweet as a nut. But I sold my peach for money enough to buy twelve when I go to the city."

His father patted him on the head, saying,

"That was indeed prudent, but it was by no means a natural act for a child. May heaven preserve you from being a merchant!"

"And you, Edmund?" inquired the father; "what have you done with your peach?"

Edmund replied modestly, but ingenuously, "I carried mine to George, who is sick with a fever. He refused to take it, and then I laid it on the bed and came away."

"Well," said the father, "who has made the best use of his peach?" All exclaimed, "Brother Edmund."

Edmund was silent, and his mother fondly embraced him, with a tear in her eye.

He was the wisest builder, was he not? because he was so unselfish.

Those who are dishonest should also count the cost, for that, too, is a kind of building that will not pay. Many begin to build in this way who are not able to finish. Thus

it is with the boy who ventures to take what does not belong to him ; it may be only some of the cake or pie which his mother has put carefully away for all to share at meal-time, and which he knows it is wrong for him to touch. You all remember the two lines :

“ It is a sin to steal a pin,
Much more to take a greater thing ”—

lines which every one should think of very often, as well as commit to memory, because they contain a great deal of truth. It is very wrong to take what belongs to another, no matter how little value it may possess ; and then the one sin is almost sure to lead to another, and that to another still, and thus the sins are piled up just as you pile up stones in a building—stones that are crumbling to pieces almost as fast as you lay them, so that the building really makes no progress, so that it requires a continual outlay, and affords no shelter in the end.

There are various kinds of dishonesty, you

know. A lie told in order to gain some supposed advantage is an act of dishonesty. If a boy in selling his marbles, or a man in selling dry goods or other things, says they cost him more than they did, it is the same as stealing, because the purchaser is made to believe that he is getting more for his money than he really is. All that is obtained from him by misrepresentation is obtained without his consent—just as much so as if you were to put your hand into his pocket and take that amount without his knowing it.

When Mr. Lawrence of Boston, who became a very rich man, first went into business—which was in a very small way, and with money borrowed for the purpose—he resolved that he would always tell the truth in regard to every transaction, would never say that his goods cost more than they really did, would never say that they were better than they really were, would never cheat or deceive in any manner, but deal fairly and honestly at all times and with everybody.

The result was that people soon found this out, and knew that it was very much to their advantage to go to this man's store, because they would always be sure to get the full worth of their money; one told another, and in this way the business increased, and became very large and profitable—just because those who conducted it always told the truth. In this case it was clearly shown that honesty is the best policy—best for those who practice it as well as for those toward whom it is practiced. But then you are never to be honest because it *is* the best policy, only because it is the most profitable to yourself. If that is your only motive, it might happen at some time that you would think it the best policy to be dishonest, and then you would let your honesty go. You must be honest because it is right, because it is what God would have you to be. You must tell the truth because you love the truth, though some might try to persuade you that it would be more to your advantage

to tell a lie. Whether it is for your advantage or not, do what is right.

While I am talking about the importance of your being always honest and truthful, I want to warn you against the folly of deceiving yourself. This is often done, as when a boy persuades himself that he is doing right when he is doing wrong, or that he may commit a little sin which will not injure any one else very much without any injury to himself, or that if he injures no one but himself in what he does it is no sin at all. But though in stealing a penny from a rich man you would not really hurt him, and he might never know it, and would certainly never feel it, you would be breaking God's holy law, and would commit a wrong against your own soul. I have known boys at school who were lazy, and did not love study, to think that they were only cheating the teacher, when indeed they were cheating themselves far more than him. Perhaps you have seen such boys at recitation slvly

peeping in the book and reading the lesson which they ought to have committed to memory, or jogging the boy next to them for the answers which they ought to have acquired by their own study. The boy who does that thing will probably grow into a blockhead and a dunce, and learn too late that, with all his management, he has only managed to keep knowledge from his own brain. That is a very expensive kind of building—so expensive that no one can afford it; it costs a great deal of ingenuity, a great deal of low cunning, a great deal of meanness, and when it is finished everybody sees that it was built with a fool's money, and that nobody but a fool can live in it.

I do not suppose that any one of my readers has ever been guilty of such an absurd kind of cheating, but then I can imagine that they have been asked more than once to help others deceive their teachers and cheat themselves. If you have ever done this, never do it again. The greatest

kindness you can show to any boys or girls who are indolent, and wish you to help them hide it, is to let them know at once that you have no help for those who will not help themselves. They will call you mean, but no matter: snow would be just as white though all the people in the world were to call it black. All the right-minded would call you magnanimous, truly great and truly kind. All the advantage gained by deception of any sort costs more than it is worth.

“Do you want to buy any berries to-day?” said a little boy to a lady, who stood at her door one afternoon.

She looked at the little fellow and saw that he was poorly dressed. In his hand was a large basket full of ripe raspberries. The lady told him she would like some, and taking the basket from him, stepped into the house. When she saw that he did not follow her, she said: “Why don’t you come in and see if I measure your berries rightly? How

do you know but I may cheat you and take more than I agreed for?"

The boy looked up at her and smiled. "I am not afraid," said he, "for you would get the worst of it, ma'am."

"Get the worst of it!" said the lady; "what do you mean?"

"Why, ma'am, I should only lose my berries, but you would be stealing. Don't you think that would be the worst for you?"

Dishonesty, untruthfulness, will not pay. Do not *begin* to build with such materials as these; they are very expensive, and are rotten and crumbling at best. The other day I saw workmen laying a wooden pavement, and one of the things I noticed was this: There was one man who examined every block to see whether it was sound. When he found a block partly decayed he chopped off the decayed portion with a hatchet he held in his right hand, and when he found one much decayed he flung it away. Why did he do this? Because it

was less expensive to make the pavement right at first than to repair it afterward. Keep all rotten timber out of the house you are building. You will find it harder work to take it out and put better in its place than to use that which is sound at first. Be sure not to tell the first lie—not to do the first wrong thing—for this is like using rotten timber, and will be worse for yourself than for any one else. A lie once told, a wicked deed once committed, will cling to you, will leave ugly marks upon your memory and conscience, even if you *are* sorry that you told the lie and committed the deed. They cannot be wiped out entirely, do what you will.

A virtuous queen of the East had a wild and dissolute son over whom she often wept, and with whom she often expostulated. He said that his vicious inclinations were too strong for his judgment and decision of character to overcome. The fond mother requested him to drive up a nail in his room

every time he yielded to depraved inclination, and thus committed a fault which his judgment and conscience condemned, and to draw out a nail as often as he conquered his inclination when tempted to sin. He complied with her request, and commenced driving a nail whenever he detected himself in a fault. The nails went in so rapidly that he became alarmed at his own wickedness and firmly resolved on a reformation. So strong was his resolution that the nails were drawn out one after another in quick succession until finally they all disappeared. Elated by the success of his effort, he invited his mother into his room, and in a triumphant tone called on her to witness the evidence of his reformation. To put a damper on his self-confident spirit, and to lead him to guard against future temptation, his mother said to him, "My son, though the nails are all drawn, yet remember that the *prints* of them are still there."

Now, if you were to ask me, "How shall I

build, and with what materials?" I might answer in these few words: *Always try to do right.* But that means a great deal. It means, Try to do everything you can to please God, and to make those around you happy. I am not sure you will always do this. I am quite sure you will not. But the *trying* is what God expects of every one of us.

After having said thus much about what you *are not* to do and what you are to *try* to do, I must say a few words about what you *cannot* do. You may build wrongly, as I have told you, by doing wrong, and you may build wisely by doing right, but you cannot lay the foundation of right character. It is a fortunate circumstance for us that God has already furnished the foundation. That foundation is Jesus Christ. You are not to endeavor to lay a foundation of your own, but you are to build upon him. And by this I mean that when you find yourself tempted to sin you must go to him for

strength, and when you find that you have sinned you are to go to him for pardon. You are to ask the Saviour for all that you need to enable you to build aright, to enable you to cultivate right tempers and do right deeds.

A little girl six years old was one evening gently reproved by her pious mother for some of her faults during the day. She seemed very sorry, and shortly afterward, when she was alone, some one passed by, and heard her talking, but in too low a tone for any one to understand what she said.

The next evening, after repeating her usual prayer at her mother's knee, the little girl asked earnestly, "Have I behaved better to-day?" Her mother answered that she was much pleased with the day's improvement, and hoped that her little daughter would always behave as well. "Then," replied the child, "I must go and talk with God again. I told him yesterday that I wanted to be good, and begged him to help

me, and he has helped me all day long, so that I could not be naughty even when I felt it in me."

Yes, dear children, the evil is *in us* all the time, and it is only by God's grace we can subdue it. Go and *talk* to him about it, and he will help you to avoid every evil way.

This is one of the results of building upon Christ: he gives you strength in the hour of temptation.

But then you might have a great deal of fear when you find you are not building right—when you fall into sin—as you often do. If you build upon Christ, he takes away this fear, because he has died for you, and your sin is forgiven for his sake.

One day as a little boy was crossing a dam his foot slipped, and he fell into one of its deepest parts. His companion ran at once to the nearest house for assistance, but when aid reached the drowning boy hardly a ripple moved the surface of the water to show where he went down. A strong arm,

however, soon brought him to the surface. But oh how changed from the merry boy of a few moments before! Would life ever return? After some time of deep anxiety, with what delight did his friends hail the first sign of returning consciousness!

When he became able to speak, he said, "I thought I should die, but I was not afraid." He was asked, "Why not?" The reply was, "I love Jesus." Thus this boy, only eight years old, had a faith in the Saviour that enabled him to say, "I was not afraid to die."

Do you know now what it is to build upon Christ? I believe some of you do from your own experience, and I hope others will be led thus to build. When you thus build you have a tower indeed, and this it is: Christ the foundation, good honest work for the Saviour the building itself, and all the kind and gentle tempers the ornaments that make it beautiful. The way to count the cost is to love the Saviour, for then you will be sure to obey him.

In the Light.

"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."—JOHN viii. 12.

CHAPTER V.

IN THE LIGHT.

YOU all know the difference between light and darkness. When the sun shines we see the trees and the flowers and the faces of our friends, and many things that make us glad and happy, and when the darkness comes all these disappear. It is the light that makes the grass look green, and imparts to the flowers the colors by which they are distinguished from each other. It is the light that gives such varied tints to the feathers of the birds, so that some are red, others gray, others black and others like silver or gold. It is light that makes the emerald green and the topaz yellow. When the sun's rays enter the rain-drops during a shower they are as white as the driven snow, but they come out on the other side dressed

in a beautiful robe of seven colors, and form the rainbow. And so you may often see the same colors produced in the same manner in drops of dew on the grass, which look like sparkling gems.

But we cannot speak of light without also speaking of the eye. The one is made for the other. No part of the outside world is bright and beautiful to those who are blind. It is with them just as if you were kept always in a dark room. And the eye is quite as wonderful as the light itself. The eye is a darkened chamber with a window in front, and this window is hung with a beautiful curtain, circular in form, sometimes blue and at other times gray or brown. This curtain is called the *iris*, which means "the rainbow," a name given to it because it has these various colors. When we say a girl or boy has blue eyes we mean merely that this little round curtain is blue.

In the middle of this curtain is the pupil, through which the light enters, and when

the sunshine falls upon it very brightly the curtain is drawn, and it becomes smaller and smaller until it is only a little black point. It will not answer to have too much light in the eye, so it is not intended that we should gaze directly at the sun, but only at the pictures which the sun paints.

When we go to sleep we put down the shutters—which are the eyelids, you know—and shut out the light altogether. But the eyelids rise and fall every moment when we are awake, and this we call winking. “An outside window soon gets soiled and dirty, and a careful shopkeeper cleans his windows every morning. But our eye-windows must never have so much as a speck or spot upon them, and the winking eyelid is the busy shop-boy, who, not once a day, but all the day, keeps the living glass clean.”

Then behind the iris is a magnifying-glass through which the light passes, and beyond that the inside surface of the back part of the eye has a black curtain spread

over it, with a very delicate white one in front. This last-named curtain, which is called the retina, is said to resemble, when seen alone, the cup of a white lily, "and, like it, ends in a stem, named the optic nerve; the stem in its turn, after passing through the black curtain, is planted in the brain," and thus it is we can think and talk about the things above and around us.

In that little darkened chamber, called the eye, the stars, and the mountains, and the rivers, and all the faces we see, are hung up as pictures; not all the while, for each one, almost as soon as it is formed, passes away and gives place to another. But in the mind and the soul they may be hung up for ever.

As you grow older you will learn, I hope, more about the light and the eye; and the more you learn, the more, I trust, will you praise and love Him who made them, and the better will you understand the Saviour when he says, "I am the-light of the world ;

he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness."

The Saviour is also called the Sun of Righteousness—the Sun that rises upon the soul, and fills it with gladness, and makes all its tempers what they should be, and as God would have them; just as the natural sun flings its light upon the earth, and paints the grass and the flowers, and causes them to grow. This knowledge of our duty, these lovely dispositions, these fruit-bearing lives, which Christ alone can give, may belong to those who have never had the use of their eyes. Without the light that comes from the gospel, however strong and clear-sighted your eyes may be, you are walking in darkness.

Do you think you could be happy if you could not see the hills, and the streams, and the faces of those you love? Certainly—far happier than many are who have the most beautiful pictures hung up in their eye-chambers every day. It is better to be

blind than to hate God and love sin, and if the soul is all lighted up with joy, the sunshine that lights the mountain-tops, and makes the snow glisten, can even be spared without taking away all enjoyment. I do not say that eyes, and the light that falls upon them from all the beautiful things around us, are not great blessings: I only say that the light which Jesus sheds in the soul is the greatest blessing of all, and that if you have that light you can be happy, whatever else you may not have.

I have often visited schools where the blind are taught to read, and write, and sing, and have heard them talk and laugh as if they had everything they desired. Some of them, I knew, had the love of Jesus in their souls, and were walking in the light of his countenance, and I felt that they were not to be pitied half as much as those who have bright eyes and wicked hearts.

There was a blind man once who thought

he had the advantage of those who could see. He was standing with uplifted head in the mild sunbeams of a spring day. The warmth of the sun penetrated his limbs, and its splendor beamed upon his darkened eyes.

"O thou incomprehensible sea of light!" he was heard to say, "thou wonder of the almighty Hand that formed thee and directs thee in thy glorious path! How great must He be who created thee!"

The one who heard him inquired, "How can you thus admire the sun when you do not behold it?"

"For that very reason," was the answer. "Since my eyes have been darkened, so that I cannot see its brightness, every sensation of its rays causes it to rise within me, and its splendor shines in my soul. But you only behold it, as you see everything else, with the natural eye."

There are some things that Christ alone can enable us to see. He alone can show us how to obtain the forgiveness of our sins.

I suppose your faults—those you are liable to commit every day—have often made it appear very dark within and around you ; I am sure they have if your conscience is tender, and if you feel toward God's holy law as you ought to feel. You have been very unhappy when you have thought of the many wrong things you have done.

“I wish father would come home!” said a boy, in a troubled tone of voice, and with a face that looked very sad.

At length the door-bell rung, and the boy glided down stairs, but as soon as his father saw him, he said, “You are in trouble, my son. What has happened?”

The eyes of the boy filled with tears as he looked into his father's face. He tried to answer, but his lips quivered. Then he turned away, and opening the door of a cabinet, brought out the fragments of a broken statuette which had been sent home only the day before, and set them on the table before his father, over whose counte-

nance fell a shadow of regret. "Who did this, my son?" was asked in an unruffled tone.

"I did it."

"How?"

"I threw my ball in there once, only once, in forgetfulness."

The poor boy's voice was husky and tremulous. It took a little while for the father to control himself and collect his disturbed thoughts, for he was only human, you know. Then he said, cheerfully, "What is done, my boy, cannot be helped. Put the broken pieces away. You have had trouble enough about it, I see, and reproof enough for your thoughtlessness, so I shall not add a word to increase your pain."

"Oh, father," said the boy as he threw his arms about his father's neck, "you are *so* kind, *so* good!"

That is just the way God leads you into the sunshine whenever you confess your sins to him and ask his forgiveness. When you

take the hand of Jesus, and he leads you to his cross, and tells you how he died that you might be saved, you see at once how it is that God is your Father, and you do not wonder that when you go to him in sorrow he smiles upon you, and draws his loving arms closely around you. There would be no light in the dark path of sin if Jesus were not there to guide those who want to leave that path in the way that leads to his Father's throne and love. When the Saviour hung on the cross there was darkness from the sixth to the ninth hour over all the land, but then the light came, and it has been shining ever since, and is shining now in every heart that can sing:

“On thee alone my hope relies ;
Beneath thy cross I fall,
My Lord, my Life, my Sacrifice,
My Saviour and my all.”

Then, Christ also gives us the light of his promises, so that those who follow him have bright hopes instead of gloomy fears.

Rothschild, the great Jewish banker, who was supposed to be the richest man in the world, was once asked this simple question, "Are you happy?"

"Happy," he answered, "when just as you are going to dinner you have a letter placed in your hand saying, If you don't lend me five hundred pounds I will blow your brains out! Happy, when you have to sleep with pistols under your pillow! No, indeed, I am not happy."

Had he walked in the light of the Saviour's example, and expended his vast wealth in doing good, I suppose his answer would have been very different.

A poor, lame and aged woman who lived in one small room, and earned a part of her scanty living by knitting, and for the rest had to depend on the kindness of others, was once asked this same question: "Lydia, are you happy?"

"Happy!" she answered, with a beaming face; "I am just as full as I can be; I do

not believe I could hold another drop of joy."

"But why? You are sick, and alone, and have almost nothing to live upon."

"Have you never read," said she, pointing to the Bible, "'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's'? And again, 'Ask and receive that your joy may be full'?"

You know how it is in the dark. If you were hungry and starving, there might be food within reach which you would not be able to find. So it was with the rich man of whom I have just spoken. He might have been very happy, but because he did not walk in the light of God's promises, such as, "He that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord," he could not find the way. But the poor woman who was sick, and had to work for her daily bread, and depend upon charity at the same time, had Christ, the Light of the world, at her side, and he made everything bright and beautiful around

her. She was happy whilst the rich man was full of anxiety.

“Lo, I am with you alway”—that is one of Christ’s promises, and a precious one it is: with you in the hour of temptation to make plain the way of escape, with you in my gentle, loving words, so that you will not be afraid or discouraged when you are trying to do right. No matter how dark the night may be, and though the lights in the room may have been all put out, if you hear the voice of your mother at the side of your bed, and she takes your hand in hers, you go to sleep without any fear. Then you can understand the Saviour’s promise, “Lo, I am with you alway.”

One morning a mother gave to her two little ones books and toys to amuse them while she went to attend to some work in an upper room. A half hour passed quietly, and then a timid voice at the foot of the stairs called out, “Mamma, are you there?”

“Yes, darling.”

"All right, then ;" and the child went back to its play. By and by the question was repeated : "Mamma, are you there?"

"Yes."

"All right then ;" and the little ones, reassured of their mother's presence, again returned to their toys. Thus we, God's little ones, in doubt and loneliness, look up and ask, "Father, art thou there?" and when there comes in answer the assurance of his presence our hearts are quieted.

Far away in the gloomy prison of Andersonville a little drummer-boy was dying. The matted brown hair was pushed back from the white brow, and in his wasted, haggard features his fond mother, if she had seen him, would scarcely have recognized the handsome, merry-hearted boy who had a short time before made pleasant sunshine in her widowed home. Manfully and patiently had he battled with the hardships of his prison life, never complaining and never despairing, but hunger and exposure

of every kind had done their work too well, and therefore he could not escape terrible sufferings. But our kind heavenly Father sent the angel of mercy to bear his brave spirit to his house of many mansions. The blue eyes unclosed, the pale lips moved, and the comrade bent his head to catch his dying words. "Put the bright side out to mother," he said, and one more prisoner was free. Truly there was a bright side if Jesus was there.

If Christ is your light, you will show it in everything you do—you will not be afraid to have your actions seen and known. I never saw a flower yet that loved darkness rather than light. But the wicked prefer the darkness because they want to hide their deeds. Every flower exhibits the light of the sun in its own beautiful colors, and so are you to let your light shine—the light that Christ gives you, and that thus becomes yours, just as we speak of the light of the moon when it shines upon the hills

and the valleys, and makes the streams look so bright, which is not the light of the moon at all, but is really borrowed from the sun.

“How I love to help mother!” said little Sophie Foster as with a sigh of satisfaction she rose from rocking the cradle. Baby was fast asleep. The gray cat lay winking and blinking before the fire. The sunshine poured in bright and golden, and played with the leaves of the ivy that had been trained over the window. Presently mother came in, and went right up to Sophie and kissed her before she knew it. “So baby is asleep. You have been a great comfort to me. My headache is all gone, and now you may put on your red riding-hood and boots and water-proof cloak, and go out to play.”

Sophie's face was very bright as she skipped over the sidewalk that afternoon. You do not wonder why. It was the light shining from within that looked so pleasantly out of her eyes. She had denied herself a

visit to a little cousin that she might help mother, and so she walked in the light of the Saviour's example, for he denied himself, and he tells us that we must take up our cross daily and follow him. This cross-bearing is not always easy, but it is always right, and the purest joy comes out of it in the end. Clouds and disappointments will not make you uneasy and fretful if you only have Christ at your side and the light of his love in your heart, because you will always find work to do for him wherever you may be—pleasant work, work that will bring happiness to you because it will make others happy.

"Oh dear! it always *does* rain when I want to go anywhere!" cried little Jennie Moore. "It's too bad! Now I've got to stay in-doors, and I know I shall have a wretched day."

"Perhaps so," said Uncle Jack, "but you need not have a wretched day unless you choose."

“How can I help it? I wanted to go to the park, and play on the grass, and pull wild flowers, and now there is not going to be any sunshine at all, and I shall have to stand here and see it rain all the day long.”

“Well, let’s make a little sunshine,” said Uncle Jack. This made Jennie smile through her tears, showing that Uncle Jack had manufactured a few rays already. So Jennie agreed to be his partner in this new business, and went to work according to these three rules:

First, Don’t think of what might have been if the day had been better.

Second, See how many things there are left to enjoy.

And, *lastly*, Do all you can to make other people happy.”

Jennie began by amusing her little brother, who was crying. By the time she had him riding a chair and laughing she was laughing too. After that she found many a pleasant amusement, and when bed-time came

she kissed her kind uncle good-night, and was even far more happy than if she had spent the day in playing on the grass and gathering wild flowers. But that was not all. She dreamed that night that Uncle Jack had built a great house, and put a sign over the door which read :

SUNSHINE FACTORY.

She made her uncle laugh when she told her dream ; but she never forgot what you must remember : *A cheerful heart makes its own sunshine.* A cheerful heart is one in which the Saviour dwells. If you follow him, you will not walk in darkness : all days and all duties will be bright and beautiful.

“The world is ever as we take it,
And life, dear child, is what we make it.”

Thus spoke a grandame, bent with care,
To little Mabel, flushed and fair.

But Mabel took no heed that day
Of what she heard her grandame say.

Years after, when no more a child,
Her path in life seemed dark and wild.

Back to her heart the memory came
Of the quaint utterance of the dame :

“The world, dear child, is as we take it,
And life, be sure, is what we make it.”

She cleared her brow, and smiling thought,
“’Tis even as the good soul taught !

“And half my woes thus quickly cured,
The other half may be endured.”

No more her heart its shadow wore ;
She grew a little child once more.

A little child in love and trust,
She took the world—as we, too, must—

In happy mood ; and, lo ! it grew
Brighter and brighter to her view.

She made of life—as we, too, should—
A joy ; and, lo ! all things were good

And fair to her, as in God’s sight,
When first he said, “Let there be light.”



Christ at the Door.

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"Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."—REV. iii. 20.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRIST AT THE DOOR.

“**B**EHOLD, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.”

There are five things alluded to in these words—a door, a knocking, a voice without, an answer within and a supper.

First, there is *a door*. And what sort of a door do you suppose it is? Do you think it is made of wood, like the doors of the house you live in? Sometimes it is harder than wood—harder than the hardest stone—and more strongly fastened than any door with iron locks and bolts, so that even the love of God, which is the strongest thing in the world, cannot get in. The door here spoken of is the human heart.

And who is it that is knocking at this door? Why it is Jesus, the Saviour, who wants to make your heart his home and live with you for ever.

I have said the heart is sometimes very hard, by which I mean very wicked, very unfriendly to the Saviour, very unwilling that he should enter. I have said this, not because I wish to say anything unkind, or anything that will make you feel unhappy, but because it is the truth. The Bible speaks of those who make their hearts as "an adamant" or diamond, which is the hardest kind of stone. And one of God's promises is, I will take away the stony heart and give a heart of flesh—that is, a tender heart; and this he does whenever we love the Saviour and keep his commandments.

I once heard of a boy who was ashamed of his mother merely because she was poor, and who did not like to walk with her in the street for fear the other boys would

notice her plain dress, which, though very clean and neat, was very cheap. His mother had done all she could for him—had watched over him in his infancy, had nursed him when he was sick, had purchased for him clothes far better than her own, and sent him to school while she worked hard every day. He ought to have been proud of such a mother. But with all her love for him, she had no place in his heart. You will say his heart must have been very hard not to let his own mother in; you would not hesitate to call him a very hard-hearted boy for despising his mother. But then you are to remember that Jesus has done for you more than any mother could do for her child. What, then, do you think of your own heart if you do not love the Saviour who has shown so much love for you?

Then, *how* does Jesus knock at the door? How does he try to get possession of your heart—to win your love?

There are several ways in which he does

this. First, he does it by means of his words. Every time he speaks to you in the gospel he is knocking at the door. Whenever he tells you of his love for you—tells you how he came into the world on purpose to die for you—he is saying, “Let me have a place in your heart, let me have a place in your love,” just as plainly as your father and your mother say it by every tender, affectionate word they speak to you, and by everything they do to make you happy.

Jesus sends others who come to you in his name and plead for him. Your parents have told you at home, your Sabbath-school teacher has told you in the class, what Jesus has done for you, and you have often been urged to give your heart to him. And perhaps you have resolved more than once not to shut your heart against this kind and loving Saviour any longer. It may be that you have been deeply affected by what you have read and heard of the love of Jesus

for you—you have even wept, it may be, sometimes, when you have thought of this love—and yet your heart is closed, you keep putting the Saviour off. I wonder sometimes how this can be. I think if I were to try very hard that I could make the youngest child I know think a great deal of me as a friend, and be willing to do anything for me that a child could do.

I can account for this. If I shake hands with you when I meet you, and speak pleasant words, I expect that you will be pleasant too, that you will be as kind to me as I am to you. But I cannot account for it that you will do all this for me, yet that when the Saviour smiles upon you, you do not bid him welcome, that when he approaches you, instead of running into his arms, you run away from him and hide, as you would from a stranger, or from one who was not a stranger whom you feared and disliked. Perhaps you think as did a fine little fellow scarcely six years old who said, "Mamma,

when I am a man I will begin to love Jesus." His mother had told him time after time that he ought to love Jesus while young, but all that she had said to him seemed to be in vain. When he uttered these words her reply was,

"But, my dear, suppose you do not live to be a man?"

He remained silent for some minutes, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, as if in deep thought, and then with a resolute countenance told her he would begin "at once."

That was a very wise conclusion. But suppose you were sure that you would live to be a man or a woman, would it be right to put off loving Jesus until then? I would not tell you so. You would not tell yourself so. You would not say to father, or mother, or any other kind friend, "Wait till I am grown up, and then I will begin to love you." It would be a very unwise and unbecoming speech. And why should you say to Jesus what you would not say to any

one in the world who loves you, and whom you ought to love? God says, "My son, give me thine heart."

"Not yet," said the little boy as he was busy with his trap and ball; "when I grow older I will think about it."

The little boy grew to be a young man. "Not yet," said the young man; "I am going into business: when I see my business prosper I shall have more time than now."

Business did prosper. "Not yet," said the man of business; "my children must now have my care: when they are settled in life I shall be better able to attend to religion."

He lived to be a gray-headed old man. "Not yet," he still cried; "I shall soon retire from business, and then I shall have nothing else to do but to read and pray."

And so he died unsaved, just because he put off from time to time what should have been done when he was a child.

The Saviour is knocking now at your heart by means of his tender, earnest, loving words, as he has often knocked. I hope you will not send him away again. Only think what precious words they are! He says if you will open your heart to him he will come in and sup with you—will make your heart his own home, and always remain there. I cannot tell you what this means. No words of mine would enable you to understand it. If you want to know what it means, you must open the door and say :

“Welcome, welcome, dear Redeemer!

Welcome to this heart of mine :

Lord! I make a full surrender,

Every power and thought be thine;

Thine entirely—

Through eternal ages thine.”

Then, too, Jesus knocks by means of *conscience*. I suppose you have often felt that you ought to love the Saviour, and that it is wrong and very sinful not to love him. Now, that feeling is the voice of the Saviour saying to you, “Let me in.” When-

ever conscience speaks, and in whatever way, and we are troubled on account of any sin, it is as if Jesus were saying, "Only let me into your heart, and I will keep sin away."

There was a little girl named Hilda who was not handsome by any means, but a very plain-looking child, but when her heart was full of good purposes and her hands were busy in carrying them out, the inward beauty could not help showing outside, and no one would think she was homely-looking. But Hilda was strongly tempted one day at the very time she was doing all she could to put the room in order for a sick neighbor. Her hands were very busy, and she looked bright and happy, and even beautiful. But suddenly the light all went out from that little face, and left it, oh, so plain that it was not indeed pretty at all. The low forehead, the little gray eyes, the little pug nose, the large mouth and the freckled skin were all there was of it—blank and homely enough. And

what do you suppose it was that had shut off the sparkling, happy light so quickly? An evil thought? Yes, that was it. The good and evil could not dwell together for a moment. So when the evil stole in the good was all gone, and it took its own brightness away with it.

In a little glass dish upon the stand were a few pieces of money. Resting her eyes upon these, Hilda had *coveted*. 'Twould only be paying herself for her work, she thought, if she took only one piece, and nobody would miss it. And the little face grew darker, darker, and the features frightfully plain. Everything was dusted, and the cloth shaken and spread upon the stand again, and the little dish with its bright tempting pieces of money was passing slowly in the little girl's hands to its corner. "Shall I?" was the question that shook every nerve in her body. No wonder the nerves shook. No wonder there was a wild look in the gray eyes, to conceal which the eyelids

twitched very fast up and down. Her hand trembled just for one moment, then it grew very firm. Thanks to the kind little monitor who is never driven away except by much evil, the dish went down in its place all right. With a great sigh of relief the child felt the bad thought go out from her heart, and instantly the joy and gladness and beauty came back and shone again over the poor little plain features.

Hilda had conquered. And how had she conquered? By letting the Saviour into her heart. When her conscience troubled her so at the thought of doing wrong, it was Jesus himself standing at the door of her heart, knocking, and saying, "Let me in, and I will drive the tempter away." So she let him in, and the moment Jesus entered, the tempter and the temptation left her.

There is a verse in the Bible which says, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Suppose some wicked boy were trying to take from you your hoop or your ball right

in front of your own house, and he were too strong for you ; what would you do to make him run ? Why, you would call your father to come and help you, and the moment he heard that name he would get away as fast as he could. I would not advise any of you to resist a wicked boy alone if you could get help, for if he were stronger than you, or even if he were not, he might give you a black eye or soil your clothes, if he did nothing worse. And it is very certain that Satan is too strong for any of us. So it is best to let Christ into the heart at once, for where he is Satan cannot be. That is one reason why Jesus wishes to be in your heart—that he may help you resist the devil and cause him to flee away from you.

I have told you two ways in which Jesus knocks at the door : one is by means of his words, and the other is by means of conscience. This is the voice without.

The other voice is inside of the door : it is *your voice* saying to the Saviour, “ Come

in," just as you say it to any friend. If you only say this, or feel it, Jesus will open the door and enter. I know the text says if *we* open the door he will come in. Well, that is the same as though it said if we do not prevent him from opening it. It is very much like this: Suppose a friend of yours should come to your house and knock at the door, and you should say, "Come in," and he should try the door-latch, and find it fastened inside; why, he would say, if you will open the door I *will* come in. By opening the door he would mean, If you will push back the bolt or turn the lock, and thus allow me to open it, I will come in. It is just so with many people. They say, "Come in," to the Saviour, and when he tries to open the door he finds it locked and bolted. You say, perhaps, to father or mother or teacher, Oh yes, I am willing to have the Saviour come into my heart, I really want him to come, and yet he does not. Now, let me say to you that if the Saviour

is not in your heart, it is because you do not want him there. He never yet kept out of any heart that was not bolted against him. If you are willing, he is so eager to come in that he will not remain a single moment outside.

How do we often treat the Saviour? Why, we let him stand knocking and pleading for a long time, and say, now and then, perhaps, in a sort of careless, indifferent way, as if we did not mean it, "Come in," and when he tries, he finds the heart all bolted against him, and thus we mock him, in addition to all our other bad treatment. In the end, it may be, he does not get in at all, but goes away, and knocks and pleads no longer. What would you think of yourself if you were to treat any other friend in such a manner as this?

The other day I saw a picture of a man with a gentle, loving face standing in a dark night before a door that was tightly shut. The night was so dark that the door would

not have been visible had it not been for a lantern which the man held in his hand. That picture represents the one spoken of in Solomon's Song as knocking and saying, "Open to me, for my head is filled with dew and my locks with the drops of the night." And the one who thus speaks is the Saviour. So long as we shut our hearts against him, it is as if we were keeping our best friend out in the darkness and loneliness of a cold, wet night.

How should you treat the Saviour? Suppose it were a sister or a brother that was knocking; would you content yourself with saying, "Come in," especially if he had been long absent, and you loved him as a brother or a sister ought to be loved? No. You would run to the door and fling it open, and you would open your arms and have the warm kiss ready, you would be so glad.

Now, this shows the *eagerness* with which you should welcome the Saviour to your heart and your home. There is a great dif-

ference, you know, in the manner in which persons are received. Sometimes you say to them, "Come in," when you would rather have them stay out. And when they are in you are very unsociable—hardly know what to say. But when a friend comes whom you love, you are at no loss for words; you are warm and earnest in everything you say and do. Some people are very polite to the Saviour; they bow to him and treat him civilly, but it is a cold civility after all: it is not the glowing, fond, generous welcome you give to a loving and beloved friend. This cold civility is very irksome. And that is the reason why many who profess to have received the Saviour into their hearts serve him so reluctantly. They always look unwilling when they are asked to do anything for Christ.

Almost anybody can tell whether your greeting is reserved or not—whether you are glad to see him or not—and Jesus certainly can. He does not make his abode where he

is not welcome. He may just look in, but will turn away again if the heart is not eager to receive him. It was a beautiful answer given by a great lady on being asked where her husband was, who lay concealed for having been deeply concerned in a conspiracy, when she resolutely replied that she had hid him. This confession drew her before the king, Charles the Second, who told her that nothing but her revealing where her lord was could save her from torture.

“And will that do?” said the lady.

“Yes,” replied the king; “I’ll give you my word for it.”

“Then,” said she, “I have hid my lord in my heart; there, and there alone, you’ll find him.”

When any one asks you where *your* Lord is, you should be able to say, “I have hid him in my heart.”

And now what shall I say of *the supper* that Jesus will eat with you and you with him if you thus open your heart to him?

There are two words that, I think, tell the whole : they are, *security* and *strength*. When you sit down to a comfortable meal in a comfortable room, with friends around you and a good appetite, you feel safe ; you fear no danger, and the eating gives you new strength.

Let me illustrate what I mean by security.

During the late war a Sunday-school teacher was passing with a friend through the woods of Virginia. They thought they had the countersign, but when challenged by the sentinel found to their dismay that a wrong one had been given them. As the sentinel was a Sunday-school boy, and knew the gentlemen, they were allowed to retrace their steps and secure the right word, and were then permitted to pass. As they passed the Sunday-school teacher said to the sentinel, "Have you got the other countersign, my boy?"

"Yes, thank God, I have," was the answer.

“What is it?”

“The blood of the Lord Jesus Christ,” was the soldier’s reply.

And now I will tell you what I mean by *strength*. A bright boy who loved the sea entered on a sailor’s life, and was made master of a ship while yet quite a young man. On one occasion, when near the port toward which he was sailing, in order to reach the dock with the morning tide, instead of telegraphing for a pilot to take the vessel into port, he resolved to be his own pilot. Old, bronzed and gray-headed seamen turned their swarthy faces to the sky, which boded squally weather, and shook their heads. The result was that his queenly ship was wrecked, and the costly freight was lost in the sea. The glory of that young man was his strength; but he was his own pilot. *His own pilot!* There was his blunder—fatal, suicidal blunder. Take Christ into your heart, and he will say to all your stormy passions, “Peace! be still.”

Let me in, he says, that I may be your beauty, and your wisdom, and your strength, and your salvation. How long will you let the Saviour knock and plead before you open the door?



A City and a Candle.

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"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick."—MATT.
v. 14, 15.

CHAPTER VII.

A CITY AND A CANDLE.

THE other morning as I was looking out of the window and saw the houses that are built along the edge of the opposite mountain, I thought of these words of the Saviour: "A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick." I thought of the important lesson they contain, and then I determined to give that lesson to my young friends.

Somebody says there are

"Sermons in stones;"

and in our text Jesus tells us there are sermons in cities, and in the candle or the lamp that makes home so pleasant during the darkness of the night. Everything

around us is intended to bring to us some useful lesson. When you pick up a pebble, or look at a single grain of sand, or tread upon the dried leaves that the cold days have loosened from the trees, or when your eye rests upon anything else that God has made, you ought to ask yourself, What does the pebble—or whatever it may be—tell me about God and my duty to him?

At present, we are to learn what *the city* and *the candle* say, and we shall find this, I am sure, quite enough for one lesson, quite enough to remember and to do.

Last summer, as I was journeying along the bank of the Hudson River at night, I noticed quite a large city, with stores along the edge of the water and dwellings beyond, one row above the other, on the hill-side, and lights were shining from the windows of the houses and all along the streets. A beautiful sight it was. And the city seemed to say, "In the day-time I cannot be hid, and in the night-time I do not want to be hid."

This is just what the text tells us in regard to our actions. First, when it talks of the city set upon a hill, it tells us that we cannot hide them; and then, when it talks of the candle on a candlestick, it tells us that we should have no desire to hide them.

First, I want you to remember that *you cannot hide your actions*. You certainly cannot hide them from God, for he knows all things—knows what you are doing, though you may try to conceal it ever so much—knows even all the thoughts and wishes of your heart—knows whether they are right or wrong. What is gained, then, by hiding from those around us what we cannot hide from God?

I read, not long ago, the story of an Indian girl who loved Jesus. Nothing grieved her so much as to displease him. One day her teacher said to her, “Eva, will you sweep the school-house for me?”

“Yes, ma’am,” said she, very cheerfully;

and so Eva was left alone in the deserted school-room.

Having occasion to return, the teacher's surprise was great when she found the broom lying on the floor and little Eva sobbing violently.

"What is the matter, my dear child?" she inquired anxiously.

The weeping child hid her face in her teacher's dress, but could not speak. At last she said, "Oh, I've been so wicked!"

"Why, Eva, what have you done?"

"Oh, I don't love Jesus *enough*," sobbed the child; "I *looked angry* at some girls to-day!"

"Did you strike them?"

"No."

"Nor speak unkind words to them?"

"Oh no, no, but I *looked angry*. I was very angry in my heart, and I'm afraid Jesus can never forgive me."

She could not be comforted until they knelt and asked Jesus to forgive his little

child her sin. That Indian girl knew that Jesus looks at the heart even of a little child.

But then it is impossible altogether to hide our actions, or even our thoughts, from those around us.

The boy who has done right, and who has no desire to do wrong, wears a bright face, glowing all over with the sunshine of joy that is in his heart. He is not afraid to look you in the eye. But if you are guilty of deliberate faults, of doing what you know you ought not to do, you will be shy and feel afraid to meet your best friends; when you hear father or mother enter the door, instead of being glad, you will feel uneasy, and go where you can be alone; and when that father's eye at last meets yours, and you see that mother's smile, full of love and confidence, your eye will drop and your cheek will be covered with the blush of shame. It is quite right that it should be so, for it would be very sad, because it would show

how extremely hardened in wickedness you had become, if you could commit sin and then stand as erect and wear as bright a look as if you had always tried to avoid it.

I once heard of a little girl who was detected in a very serious fault by a kiss. Her mother had told her not to touch a jar of mince-meat that stood on the table. But during her mother's absence she put her hand into the jar and helped herself, and then ran into the play-room and stayed a long time. She washed her hands and face quite clean, and was sure nobody had seen her and that no one would find it out. But when her mother undressed her at night she saw a piece of mince-meat clinging to her apron. The mother hoped it was an accident, so she asked, "Did you touch the mince-meat in play?"

"No," said the little girl, "I didn't take any." But her face became very hot, and she crept into bed, not daring to ask her mother to kiss her, and yet feeling that she

could not go to sleep without the accustomed kiss.

Presently her mother stooped over her, but as she raised her child's lips to her own her eyes filled with tears, and her face grew white as she exclaimed, "My child has surely told a lie! Oh, Nettie, your breath tells the story. That was a bitter kiss my little daughter was going to give her mother." Then she kneeled down by the little bed, and put her arms around Nettie, and asked the Saviour to forgive her, and every now and then she had to stop, the tears came so fast.

"I shall never forget that time," said this child when she grew older, "nor the bitter kiss I was going to give my mother."

But though you were able to hide wrong actions and wicked thoughts from others, you would not be able to hide them from yourself. The memory of them would follow you every day. You would have an uneasy conscience. Even if you were to

put on a smile when you met your friends, and pretend to be light-hearted, there would be a heavy weight in your soul.

“Children,” said Mrs. Jay, “you may play anywhere in the yard, but don’t go beyond the garden gate. Do you hear me, Peter?”

“Yes, mother,” said Peter, looking up from his wheelbarrow—“do not go beyond the garden gate.”

But Peter did go beyond the garden gate, into the wood, and along the brook that ran through it, and then said to Jessie, “Don’t you tell.”

“Not if mother asks?” inquired Jessie.

“She won’t ask,” said Peter.

Mother did not ask, nor did Jessie tell, and all went on at home as usual. But on Saturday night, after Jessie had gone to sleep, Peter and his mother talked a little longer together, as they often did on that night. Then it was that he could keep his secret no longer. He said, “Mother,

I have been in the wood beyond the garden gate this week."

"When did you go?" she asked.

He told her. "And, mother," he said, "nothing happened to us there; we didn't fall into the water, nor tear our clothes. Why didn't you want us to go?"

"You lost something that afternoon in the wood," said his mother.

"Lost something?" said Peter, and he thought of his knife, and his slate pencils, and his ball, and a three-cent piece; he hadn't lost one of them, he was quite sure.

"Think a moment what you have missed," replied his mother, "for I know you lost something."

Peter wondered how his mother could know what he didn't know himself. "You will recollect if you think," said she.

Peter put his head under the bed-quilt, for he began to see what he had lost, and the more he thought of it, the surer he became.

“Mother,” he said, at last, “you are right; I did lose something in the wood: I lost the *happiness* that was in my heart.”

This, then, is the lesson of the first part of the text—you cannot hide your actions or your thoughts from God or yourself; neither can you always hide them from those around you.

The second point contained in our Saviour’s words is that you *should have no desire to hide your actions*. You should always do right, not only for your own sake and because it will make you happy, but for the sake of example. If any of your companions are selfish, you are to be generous; if they are rough, you are to be gentle; if they are lazy, you are to be studious; if they tempt you to be disobedient, you are to resist the temptation, and silence them and make them ashamed, and lead them to do better by your noble words.

A boy was once tempted by some of his companions to pluck ripe cherries from a

tree which his father had forbidden him to touch.

"You need not be afraid," said one of his companions, "for if your father should find out that you have taken them, he is so kind he would not hurt you."

"That is the very reason," replied the boy, "why I would not touch them. It is true my father would not hurt me, yet my disobedience, I know, would hurt him, and that would be worse to me than anything else."

That boy was like a candle set upon a candlestick. He let his light shine. He did not attempt to hide his love for his father and his respect for all his father's commands. He did not shrink like a coward from the sneers of his wicked companions when they tried to argue him into sin, and hold his tongue and steal away as if he were afraid to stand up for duty, but he spoke boldly, promptly, plainly, and so that the meaning of his words could not be

mistaken. He was not like a certain little girl who has two faces. When she is dressed up in her white dress and blue sash, and has on her blue kid shoes, and around her neck a string of pearl beads, she looks so sweet and good that you would like to kiss her, for she knows that company is going to call on her mother, and she expects that the ladies will say, "What a little darling!" or, "What lovely curls!" or, "What a sweet mouth!" and then kiss her little red lips, and perhaps give her some sugar-plums. The ladies who praise her think she is very lady-like, for she always says "Yes, ma'am," and "No, ma'am," when she ought, and says "Thank you" so sweetly when anything is given her. But when she is alone with her mother, she is sometimes very naughty. If she cannot have what she would like, or cannot do just what she wishes, then she will pout, and cry, and scream. No one would ever think of kissing such lips, nor would any one suppose her to be the same little girl

who behaved so prettily in company. I might name another little girl who has only one face, and that is always as sweet as a peach, and never so sweet as when she is alone with her mother.

Always seem to be what you are. Always try to be what you ought to be, and then you will not be tempted to seem otherwise than you are.

You know how it is with a lamp. If you feed it with good, honest oil, and keep the wick properly trimmed, it will always be and do the same thing. If you put it on the table, it will light up the whole room. If you carry it with you out of doors in the darkest night, it will enable you to walk without stumbling. Such is its nature, and therefore you can always depend upon it. Such is its use, and therefore you do not light it, and then cover it and make everything around as dark as if no light were burning.

Now, it seems to me that you can hardly

fail to understand the meaning of all this. It means what I have already said—that you should always try to be what you ought to be and to do what you ought to do.

The other day I was walking past a conservatory that was full of beautiful plants and flowers, and I looked through the glass windows and saw the green leaves and the bright blossoms just as plainly as if no glass had been there. It would be right to say the glass was truthful; it certainly was transparent; it did not hide nor misrepresent; it did not make the white flower look red, nor the red flower look blue.

Thus through your words and actions should every one be able to look right into your heart, so that when you laugh it will be known that you are happy, and when you speak it will be known that you mean what you say.

“I can trust that boy,” is the very highest praise, whether it come from God or man. Aim to deserve it.

The candle also tells you that you are not to be ashamed of any right action, however humble it may be. There are boys, and girls too, who would be ashamed to carry a bundle or wear a patched garment who would not be ashamed to speak unkindly to a brother or a sister. Go into a room where the lights are burning very brightly, and if you put a single candle alongside of the brilliant lamps, it would hardly be noticed; and yet the little candle, instead of being ashamed of its littleness and going out among the greater lights, would burn as earnestly and bravely as if it were the sun itself.

A rival of a certain great lawyer sought to humiliate him publicly by saying, "You blacked my father's boots once."

"Yes," replied the lawyer, unabashed, "and I did it *well*."

That is just what God will say to those who perform the smallest duties because they love his commandments—" *Well done*."

You often sing the words,

“Dare to do right,”

but there is a great difference, remember,
between singing and doing. It requires no
courage to sing,

“I want to be like Jesus,
So lowly and so meek,”

but it requires a great deal of courage to do
as he did—to be as gentle as he was—to be
as ready as he was to perform what men
would call the meanest service. He was not
ashamed even to wash his disciples’ feet.

Do you, my young friends, want to be
brave as the Saviour was—brave in telling
the truth, brave in acting the truth? There
is one way in which it will all be easy, and
that is to *love* the truth. With love, duty is
like a golden chain; without love, it is like
a heavy burden.

Two girls were going to a neighboring
town, each carrying on her head a heavy
basket of fruit to sell. One of them was

murmuring and fretting all the way, and complaining of the weight of her basket. The other went along smiling and singing, and seeming to be very happy.

At last, the first got out of patience with her companion, and said, "How can you be so merry and joyful when your basket is as heavy as mine, and you are not a bit stronger than I am? I don't understand it."

"Oh," said the other, "it's easy enough to understand. I have a certain little plant which I put on the top of my load, and it makes it so light I hardly feel it."

"Indeed! That must be a very precious little plant. I wish I could lighten my load with it. Where does it grow? Tell me, what do you call it?"

"It grows wherever you plant it and give it a chance to take root, and there's no knowing the relief it gives. Its name is LOVE—the love of Jesus. Jesus loved me so much that he died to save my soul. This makes me love him. Whatever I do,

whether it be carrying this basket or anything else, I think to myself, I am doing this for Jesus, to show that I love him, and this makes everything easy and pleasant."

Remember, then, that they are the bravest who love Jesus most.



Prayer and Promise.

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"Ask, and it shall be given you."—MATT. vii. 7.

CHAPTER VIII.

PRAYER AND PROMISE.

“**A**SK, and it shall be given you.” This is the promise which the Saviour makes to every one. And what a precious promise it is, since it comes from One who is able to do all he declares himself willing to do!

You all know how to ask. Whenever you pray, you tell God what your wishes are, and ask him to give you what you think you need. Whenever you offer that prayer which Jesus himself taught his disciples, and which goes from your lips every Sabbath, and perhaps every day in the week, you call God your *Father*, and pray that his name may be hallowed by you—that is, that God himself may be honored and praised and obeyed in all your deeds and words. You pray that his kingdom may come, and that his will

may be done everywhere and by all, just as cheerfully and just as perfectly as it is done in heaven. You also pray for daily bread—that is, for food and raiment, and health, and every earthly comfort. You pray for the forgiveness of your sins, and ask God to keep you from temptation, and to deliver you from it when you fall into it. Now, we may be very sure that these are the things which God desires us to have, and the world to have, and that when we ask for these things and others like them our prayers will be heard and answered.

There is a difference, remember, between praying and “saying your prayers.” You *say your prayers* when you merely repeat the words and mean nothing by them, and *you pray* when you really desire and feel your need of all you pray for.

You can easily understand what I mean by this: If you were very hungry, and were to ask your mother for a piece of bread, that would be prayer. And I will

tell you how we should know it to be prayer. If your mother were to refuse at first, or seemed not to hear you, you would keep on asking, and as you grew more hungry you would become more earnest, and perhaps even cry bitterly, and would give your mother no rest until you obtained the bread. But if, on her refusing, you were to turn away without caring at all about it, and were to go laughing to your play again, your asking for bread would not be prayer, because it would be very plain that you were not hungry, and that you were asking only in sport. When I see boys and girls, or men and women, irreverent in prayer, talking or behaving improperly in the house of prayer, I know that they are asking only in sport. You must be *sincere*, then, when you pray. This is one of the conditions on which the answer is promised. If you pray for the forgiveness of your sins, you must feel that you have sinned, and be sorry for it. And if

you pray to be kept from temptation, you must try to keep yourself from it, and thus show that you want God to do for you what you ask him to do. If you felt your need of all you ask for in the Lord's Prayer, you would have your sins forgiven and be a loving and obedient follower of Jesus. If we are not sincere when we pray, we shall not expect an answer, because we do not care for it.

The story I am going to tell you now shows what sincerity is, and what a strong faith it has, though it does not follow from this story that every sincere prayer will be answered precisely as this was, for reasons which we will consider afterward. The story is this:

Willie was the only son of his parents. When very young his mother began to teach him about God and heaven, and his mind seemed to drink in all the sweet things she told him, just as the flowers receive the drops of dew that give them strength and beauty.

Before he was three years old he would often sit gazing into the sky, and would say : “ Willie’s watching for the holy angels, and waiting to hear them sing.”

The lesson that his mother endeavored to impress most deeply upon his young heart was that of *faith* in God—faith in him for all things, and that for Jesus’ sake he would bestow upon him all necessary good.

When he was four years old a terrible shadow settled down upon him, and by the time Willie was seven their home and everything was taken from them, and they were thrown upon the charity of friends. Soon Willie’s clothes and boots began to wear out, but his mother was too poor to purchase new ones. On one occasion he came to her, saying :

“ Mother, can’t I have some new boots ? My toes are all out of these. If I go out to play or to run about, the snow gets into my boots, and I am so cold !”

A tear filled his mother’s eye when she

answered, "Soon, Willie, I hope to give them to you."

He waited patiently several days, until one morning, as he stood at the window watching the boys trundling their hoops, he sobbed :

"Oh, mother, it is *too* hard ! Can't I get some boots anywhere ?"

"Yes, Willie, you can."

"I *can* ?" he eagerly exclaimed. "Where, where ? Tell me, quick !"

"Do you not know, my son ?" replied his mother. "Think, now."

Willie stood for a moment, as if in deep thought, then, with a smile, looked up to his mother's face, and said :

"Oh, I know ! God will give them to me, of course. Why didn't I think of that before ? I'll go now and ask him."

He walked out of the parlor into his mother's room. She quietly followed him, and standing concealed from his view, saw him kneel down ; covering his face with his hands, he prayed :

“O God! father drinks; mother has no money; my feet get cold and wet. I want some boots. Please send me a pair for Jesus’ sake.”

This was all. He often repeated his pitiful little petition, and the best of all was, he *expected* an answer to his prayer.

“They’ll come, mother!” he would often say, encouragingly—“they’ll come when God gets ready.” I’ll wait, for I know they will come.

Within a week a lady who dearly loved the child came to take him out walking. He hesitated for a few moments, but soon determined to go, and they started off. At length the lady noticed his stockings peeping out at the toes of his boots, when she exclaimed: “Why, Willie, look at your feet! They will freeze. Why didn’t you put on something better?”

“These are all I have, ma’am.”

“All you have! But why don’t you have a new pair?” she inquired.

"I will, just as soon as God sends them," he confidently replied.

Tears filled the lady's eyes, and with a quivering lip she led him into a shoe-shop near by, saying, "There, child! select any pair you please." The boots were soon selected, examined to see that they fitted, and put on his feet, and a more happy, thankful boy never lived.

On his return he walked into the centre of the room where his mother was sitting, and said:

"Look, mother! God has sent my boots! Mrs. Gray's money bought them, but God heard me ask for them, and I suppose he told Mrs. Gray to buy them for me."

There he stood, with an earnest, solemn light in his eye, as though he were receiving a new baptism of faith from heaven, then quietly added:

"We must always remember how near God is to us;" and kneeling at his mother's feet, he said, "Jesus, I thank you very much



Willie's Boots.

for my new boots. Please make me a good boy, and take care of mother."

Willie is now fourteen years of age, and is a consistent member of the Church of Christ. In all things he trusts his Saviour; every desire of his heart he carries directly to God and patiently waits the answer, and it *always comes*.

Ask, and it shall be given you.

You see how Willie understood this promise. He knew it to mean just what it says. That was what gave him such a strong faith. And he meant just what he said when he prayed. He was sincere, but not at all impatient, for he felt that God had his own time, and that God was wiser than he.

Well, do you believe that when Mrs. Gray gave Willie his boots God answered his prayer? I know you believe it, and so do I, quite as much as if an angel from heaven had told me so. Willie was right in supposing that God put it into Mrs. Gray's heart to give him the answer. She was God's

instrument. That is the way in which our heavenly Father sends his gifts. You pray for daily bread, and God sends your parents as his messengers to bring you the answer. Or you pray to be kept from temptation, and he sends them to warn you against all that is evil, and to guide you by their words and their examples in the right path.

It occurs to me, just here, to ask whether any of you have been God's messengers to convey answers to prayer. Many of your companions, whom you meet every day, have, perhaps, been serious and thoughtful, and anxious to have more light, and have prayed to God, it may be, to lead them to the Saviour; now, if you are the disciples of Christ, what have you ever done to enlighten and encourage them? Have you been to them God's messengers, and have you talked to them about the love of Jesus, and told them how they might be saved, and exhorted them to put their trust in him? If you have prayed for them—for their conversion to

Christ—what have you done toward obtaining an answer to your own prayer? Have you, as God's messenger, tried to convey to them the blessing you desire them to have?

But suppose Willie had not received his boots, what would he have said then? Why, he would probably have said that it was not best for him to have them. The same faith which led him to pray to God would have led him to trust God's wisdom, for he had often gone to his heavenly Father with the petition, "Thy will be done."

I have spoken thus far of sincerity and faith—the faith that trusts God, whether he gives or withholds.

2. Those who pray sincerely to God are never turned away empty. If he does not send the answer in one form, he sends it in another, and sometimes in ways not expected. Remember, I have said two things here. *The first* is that God never turns a deaf ear to those who truly pray to him. It would be

easy to relate many instances in proof of this, but I have time to mention only one.

Two old shipmates met one day, and each in a few words let out the principle of his life. The one was well dressed, and looked as though he was industrious and saving, the other was shabby and thriftless in appearance.

"Begging is a poor trade," said the thriftless-looking one; "I am getting very tired of it.

"Are you?" said the other; "well, it is not so with me. I find it a prosperous business, and like it better every day."

"That is strange enough," was the answer, "there are so many things against us. First of all, one dares not go to the same person too often."

"That's not my experience," said the other. "I find that the oftener I go, the more readily I am heard; and if I don't get what I ask for, I get something better instead of it."

"A lucky fellow you are," replied his

companion, "and in these times, too, when people shake their heads and say they have need to go begging themselves. They grow tired of my story before they have half heard it, and think it false, nor would they care much for me even if they knew it to be true."

"That is never my experience," said the other. "I go where riches abound, and where there is enough, and more than enough, for all who ask. I cannot tell my wants and sorrows too often. I am told to come with every one of them, and so deep is the interest in my behalf that what I have to tell is better known at the house where I beg than I know it myself."

"Why, what house do you beg at?" asked the astonished beggar.

"At the gate of heaven," said his companion. "And where do you beg?"

"Oh, *I* beg of the world!" said he.

"Then no wonder you are tired of your trade. Come and try my gate. If you

make your stand at that, you will never be disappointed, will never get an angry or unkind word, and never, *never* be turned empty away."

That is the manner in which God treats all who sincerely pray to him. He is never angry, never unkind and never turns them empty away. Empty? No, no! So far from it that he fills them with good. If you who pray would count all the answers to your prayers, you must count your daily blessings, and among them all the good words you speak, all the good thoughts you cherish and all the good you do to others. And if you do not sin as some others do—if you do not steal or lie, if you are not disobedient and willful and extremely selfish—you must put all these among the answers.

It is wonderful, at times, what forms these answers take.

Some time ago a little ragged boy aged nine years was secreted on an English

steamer, with the intention of having him go from Liverpool to New York without paying his passage. On the fourth day of the voyage he was discovered and carried before the first mate, whose duty it was to deal with such cases. When asked who had brought him on board, the boy, who had a beautiful sunny face, and eyes that looked like the very mirror of truth, replied that his father did it because he could not afford to keep him, nor pay his passage to Halifax, where he had an aunt with whom he expected to live. But the mate did not believe the story, in spite of the winning face and truthful accents of the boy, and the little fellow was roughly handled in consequence. Day by day he was questioned and requestioned, but always told the same story.

At last the mate, who thought the sailors had smuggled him on board the vessel, and was determined to find out the truth, if possible, in regard to the matter, seized the boy

one day by the collar, and dragging him forward, told him that unless he confessed the truth in ten minutes from that time he would hang him on the yard-arm. He then made him sit down under it on the deck.

All around him were the passengers and sailors of the mid-day watch, and in front of him stood the inexorable mate, with his chronometer in his hand, and the other officers of the ship by his side. And there was the boy with his pale face, his head erect, his eyes bright with tears. When eight minutes had fled the mate told him he had but two minutes to live, and advised him to speak the truth and save his life, but he replied with the utmost simplicity and sincerity by asking the mate if he might pray.

The mate said nothing, only nodded his head, looked very pale and trembled like a reed. And there, all eyes turned on him, this brave little fellow knelt with clasped hands and repeated audibly the Lord's

Prayer, and then asked the Saviour to take him to heaven.

Then followed a wonderful scene. Sobs broke from strong, hard men as the mate sprang forward to the boy and clasped him in his arms, and told him how sincerely he now believed his story, and how glad he was that he had been brave enough to be willing to sacrifice his life for the truth.

God protects from even greater perils all who put their trust in him. He saves them from presumptuous sins—open bold sins such as many commit while they are young.

Then, too, when we are in doubt, and hardly know what to do—when we are tempted to do what conscience does not exactly approve of—if we go to God, he will deliver us from our doubts in answer to prayer, and make the right way very plain to us.

“I wish I knew just what to do about it!” were the words that fell again and again

from Dr. Barton's lips, for the matter to be decided was a weighty one.

Each time the words were uttered the eyes of a young girl who sat sewing near by were raised wistfully toward the gentleman, till at last he noticed the earnest expression, and asked, "What is it, Pussy? What do *you* think about it?"

"I should go by papa's rule," she replied, the crimson creeping into her cheek.

"And what may papa's rule be, little Bessie?" asked her uncle.

"Never to do anything, or to say anything, or to go anywhere, when we cannot ask God's blessing to rest upon us. He says it saves a world of trouble, and is always a sure test."

Dr. Barton was a worldly man who sometimes scoffed at the simple confidence of pious souls, but no such feeling tempted him now, and silently kissing the fair forehead of his niece, he left the room.

Uttered in weakness as it was, Bessie's

lesson of trust proved the "word fitly spoken," and not many months passed before her uncle, too, claimed this test as his rule in life's duties and trials.

This leads me to say that there are some things which God always grants in answer to prayer because they are the things which all want, and want always.

It is not certain that he will always send new boots and new clothes when asked for, neither is it certain that he will not, but it *is* certain that he will give a new heart if you ask for that, and equally certain that he will give you strength for duty if you ask for that. If you pray sincerely and honestly, the answer will come at once.

Two little sisters, one seven and the other five years old, were playing together, when a little difference arose between them. Lucy, the elder, finding that her anger was rising, went out of the room, and soon returned with all the angry feelings gone. How she spent the minutes I need hardly tell you.

Lucy had not read the Bible in vain. She knew the sweet and encouraging words, "Ask, and it shall be given you," and many times had she proved these words to be true when fighting against her naturally hasty temper.

Thus it is that God will deal with you all, and always, if you will only trust him. He will take away anger and envy from your hearts, and the love of sin, and keep you from temptation.

Are any of you afraid to trust God? Sometimes I fear you are. It may be that you have had strong convictions of duty, and know that you ought to do all that God tells you to do, and yet you are afraid to venture. You feel that you are very weak and very sinful, but why do you not go for strength to that heavenly Father, that kind Redeemer, who has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you?"

Obedience the Sign of Love.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."—JOHN xiv. 15.

CHAPTER IX.

LOVE AND OBEDIENCE.

JESUS, when speaking to his disciples, not long before he laid down his life for them, said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." They had taken supper together, and after supper he had girded himself with a towel and washed their feet. And then he told them how they ought to love one another, and how kind and condescending they ought to be one to another.

The manner of Jesus, we may suppose, was as tender as his words. There were many things to make it so. He remembered the cruel treatment he had received instead of the glad welcome he had deserved. But that was not the worst of it. One of those who sat at table with him was about to betray him. That was the hardest trial of all.

Though he kept many of his own secrets, yet it seemed as if he could not keep this; so when the betrayer had fully made up his mind to sell his Master to his enemies for a few pieces of silver, Jesus told the sad story, and whispered into the ear of John, who was leaning upon his breast, the sign by which he would know who the betrayer was. Then, when Judas had left the room, we can easily imagine how earnest the other disciples were in assuring Jesus of their love for him. Simon Peter went so far, you remember, as to say, "I will lay down my life for thy sake." Then said Jesus to these disciples, when they told him of their love—a love so strong that it would outlive all persecutions, and even death itself—"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Love and obedience always go together: that is what the Saviour means.

This is very plain. You know that without obedience there can be no love. And you know likewise that to obey is to do what

you are told to do. This is what we call loving *indeed*, or in *deeds*, in distinction from loving in *words*. If I were to ask you, "Do you love the Saviour?" perhaps you would answer, "Yes." But would it be true if you were all the time thoughtlessly and carelessly doing what the Saviour has told you not to do, and omitting to do what he has commanded?

"How much I love you, dear mamma!" said little Mary Lee as she kissed her mother again and again.

"If my little daughter loves me so much, I hope she will show it by being very good and obedient to-day," said Mrs. Lee as she went out of the room to attend to some home duties, leaving Mary to amuse herself with her playthings.

In the first place, Mary rocked her doll, singing to it, "Hush, my dear! lie still and slumber," until she chose to consider dolly fast asleep; then she walked on tiptoe to the place where her blocks were stored, and

amused herself for a long time in building churches with such tall steeples that it was quite a wonder the blocks could be balanced so nicely.

At length she was tired of this employment, and seated herself in her little chair to rest. On looking around the room she saw, for the first time, her mother's watch lying on the table. Now, Mary had been told that she was never, on any account, to touch this watch. When she first saw it she had no intention of doing so, but she went up to the table, and thought she would like to take it in her hand and put it to her ear to hear it tick. Conscience, that little voice within, told her she would be disobeying her kind mother, but she hushed it by saying to herself, "Mother doesn't want me to touch her watch because she is afraid I won't be careful of it, but I will. I know I can play with it and not hurt it at all." Thus persuading herself that she was not doing very wrong, she took the watch in her

hand, held it to her ear, and then laid it down again very carefully. Then she thought she would put the chain around her neck and wear the watch as her mother did. She was just viewing herself in the glass, quite pleased that she looked so much like a grown-up lady, when she heard some one coming. In her haste to snatch off the watch it slipped through her fingers and fell with a crash to the floor, breaking the crystal and otherwise injuring it.

Just then the door opened, and her mother entered the room, and oh how grieved and sorry she was when she saw what was done! "Can it be," she said, "that this is the little girl who said she loved her mother so much an hour ago? Ah! it was only love in words; if she had felt it in her heart, she would not have disobeyed."

The story goes on to say that Mary cried very much, and asked her mother's forgiveness, and seemed truly sorry for her fault.

Did this child really love her mother?

Yes, judging from her tears, I think she did. But when guilty of disobedience she certainly did not show her love. Then something else was uppermost in her mind, and had greater power over her. She wanted to gratify herself in a forbidden way, and she began by questioning the wisdom of her mother's command, and thought she could prove that it was unwise by showing that no harm would come from her disobedience. But harm did come, and would have come had she not let the watch fall on the floor—harm to her own conscience, which she would have wounded; harm to her truthfulness, for she would have had something to conceal. There would have been a secret in her soul which would have made her unhappy. I believe Mary loved her mother, and that her words were not altogether unmeaning words, but I believe too that just then she thought more of the indulgence of her own selfish will than she did of duty to her mother. I do not say there can be no true love where

there is occasional disobedience, because I remember that the loving Peter denied his Master, and that the best of men do wrong sometimes, but I say the more obedient we are, the more we love, and that in disobedience there is no love whatever. The Apostle John says, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." That is what Jesus means when he says, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

The obedience of love is always *cheerful*. It does not stop to ask questions or utter complaints. If you see two boys going on errands, the one sulky and slow, the other, with a smile upon his face, skipping along as if his heart was full of joy, you need not be told which loves duty the most. So we can always measure our love for the Saviour by the readiness and promptness with which we obey. The work which love does is always easy, pleasant work.

One morning a young girl was busy at

the ironing-table, smoothing the towels and stockings; when asked whether it was not hard work for her little arms, a look like sunshine came into her face as she said softly, "It isn't hard work when I do it for mother." Thus it is that love makes labor sweet. "It isn't hard when I do it for mother." And so the Christian says, "It isn't hard when I do it for the blessed Saviour. Love makes his yoke easy and his burden light."

Not long since, a company of boys were playing very earnestly. One in particular seemed to be the leader of their sports, and was proposing a new game and giving instructions in regard to it. His whole heart seemed to be in the thing.

At this moment a window was thrown open in a house near by, and a sweet, gentle voice called,

"Charlie, your father wants you."

The window at once closed, and that mother—for it was her voice—immediately

withdrew without even stopping to see whether Charlie heard. Her confidence in his obedience was great.

The boy was so busy that it seemed really doubtful whether that quiet voice would reach his ear. But the words had hardly escaped the mother's lips when everything was dropped; the other boys were left at their play, and Charlie was soon within-doors. Do you doubt whether Charlie loved his mother? Yes, that is the way. The obedience of love is prompt and cheerful, does not wait to be spoken to the second time, but runs at the first call.

"Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" was the question of Paul when his first love went out toward the Saviour. And as his love grew, so did his desire to perform the will of his divine Master. He went over dangerous seas, he was beaten with rods, he was cast into prison and bound with chains, all because he loved Christ. And he suffered all just as cheerfully as you would fling down

your playthings at your father's or mother's call.

Love carries burdens, but they are always light. Remember that. If you think you love the Saviour, and want to know how much you love him, ask yourself whether the duties he tells you to perform are pleasant duties; whether you would rather perform them than not; whether it always makes you glad to be able to do something for him.

Then there is another criterion of love: it begets *self-denial*.

One of the commands of Christ requires us to deny ourselves. The more we deny ourselves, the more we make our wills subject to his will, the more manifest will it be that we love him. This is self-denial—to give up our own wishes for the wishes of another.

Suppose you and your brother or sister want the same thing, and only one can have it; if you resign your right to it, and say, Take it, brother or sister, as the case may

be, you deny yourself. That is Christ-like. That is showing our love for Christ, because it is doing as he did.

There are many ways in which this self-denial may be shown. It may enter into your sports as well as into more serious matters, and it is just as beautiful in one place as in another. The other day I read of a boy and a girl who used to play a great deal together. They both learned to love the Saviour. On one occasion the boy said to his mother, "Mother, I know that Emma is a Christian."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because, mother, she plays like a Christian."

"Plays like a Christian?" said the mother, to whom the expression sounded a little odd.

"Yes," replied the child. "She used to be selfish, but now she don't get angry if you take everything she's got."

Sometimes our selfish feelings interfere with our sense of duty, and it is not without

a struggle that we are able to tell whether we love self or the Saviour most. When Jesus was on the earth there was a rich young man who seemed anxious to be his disciple; after relating all the good things he had done, he asked, "What lack I yet?" He was told to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor, but his love for the Saviour was not strong enough for that.

Here is another example in which love triumphed, though not without a struggle:

There was a boy of seven or thereabouts who, it was hoped, had become a real follower of Christ, for from being willful and disobedient he had grown lamb-like in his temper and conduct. One day, as he stood at his mother's side, he said that he loved the Saviour so much that he would give him anything.

"Will you give him your gold guinea?" asked his mother. He looked earnestly into her face for a moment, and his eye fell. He slowly crept behind her chair, then stole to

the open window, then down stairs, without saying a word. She knew he thought much of his beautiful gold guinea, which was a coin worth five dollars in our money. Was he ready to part with his little "*all*" for Christ's sake? It was a hard question.

Two days passed away, and his mother was afraid Herman had forgotten it. But that evening he came to her and said with a sweet seriousness, "Mother, I give my guinea to the Lord Jesus;" and as he slipped it into her hand, he added, "I was not ready when you first asked me, but I am now."

"Not ready at first, but ready now:" that is the history of many a struggle in older disciples between self-will and Christ's will.

A little girl who loved her Saviour very much came to her pastor with eighteen shillings for a missionary society.

"How did you get so much? is it all your own?"

"Yes, sir; I earned it."

"But how, Mary? you are so poor."

“Please, sir, when I thought how Jesus had died for me I wanted to do something for him, and I had heard how money was wanted to send the good news out to the heathen, and as I had no money of my own, I earned this by collecting *rain water* and selling it to the washerwomen for a half a penny a bucket; that is how I got the money, sir.”

There was no struggle here. It came as easily as the rain itself comes down from the clouds, or as the sunshine comes when the day is breaking. But if there be a struggle, it matters not, so long as there is a victory too. There is always more or less fighting before we conquer self. And there is one pleasant, encouraging thought about it—the longer we fight, the more easily we win.

Then, again, love does not always accomplish what it attempts or desires. You would like to do much for the Saviour, it may be, which you have not the power to

do. You would like to see all the children in the world taught, as you are, to read and understand God's holy word, and perhaps you would be willing to give all that you possess if this could only be. But all your self-denial would not accomplish this. So you might attempt many things, and not succeed to your liking. Your own will may not yield in all things to Christ's will as readily as you desire. Your own evil tempers may rise when you think they are entirely subdued. You remember how it was with that woman who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Jesus said of her, "She has done what she could." If it had been in her power, she would have done much more, but her loving Lord took the will for the deed, as he does in all cases where honest effort and desire come short of the mark.

"I must not forget those stockings; there's a basketful this week."

Jennie's mother said this in a wearied way. The little girl was playing in her room, and began to think about helping.

"Where are they?" she asked.

"In the sitting-room," the mother answered, and thought no more about it.

An hour later she went down stairs. There sat Jennie in the large arm-chair by the open window, the basket on the table before her, and her little fingers very busy.

"Mother," she said, looking up with a bright smile, "you had twelve pair of stockings, and I've done six of them."

Jennie had given up a whole hour's play to help and relieve her mother, but she was a very little girl, and she had made a mistake. She sewed the holes over and over. And as she meant to do her best, the stitches were close and tight. Her mother knew it would be at least half an hour's work to rip them out, but she would not disappoint the loving heart by letting her know she had not fully succeeded. She said only, "Well,

you're a dear, good little girl, and now you may run out and play."

Away went Jennie, very happy in the thought that she had helped and pleased her mother. And she had, for the kindness and love she had shown were more precious to that mother's heart than gold, and lightened her care. Pleasant thoughts kept her company and made her needle move faster.

All of us, both little folks and grown folks, are liable to make mistakes, even when we try to do right. But the love of Christ is only shadowed forth faintly by that mother's love. He too takes the will for the deed, counts whatever is done out of love as done to him, and sees that no true effort is lost, but makes it do good some time, in some way, whether we see it or not.

Love is not easily disheartened, because it does not trouble itself with the question whether it is much or little that is done, but works right on, *doing* all the while, whether it be little or much. The little primrose that

is growing in my room looks as happy as if it were a sunflower. Let your love not complain because it cannot do more. Let it do well whatever it finds to do.

“Suppose the little cowslip
Should hang its golden cup,
And say, ‘I’m such a tiny flower
I’d better not grow up;’
How many a weary traveler
Would miss its fragrant smell!
How many a little child would grieve
To miss it from the dell!

“Suppose the glistening dew-drop
Upon the grass should say,
‘What can a little dew-drop do?
I’d better roll away;’
The blade on which it rested,
Before the day was done,
Without a drop to moisten it,
Would wither in the sun.

“Suppose the little breezes,
Upon a summer’s day,
Should think themselves too small to cool
The traveler on his way;
Who would not miss the smallest
And softest ones that blow,
And think they made a great mistake
If they were talking so?

“How many deeds of kindness
 A little child may do,
 Although he has so little strength
 And little wisdom too !
 It wants a loving spirit,
 Much more than strength, to prove
 How many things a child can do
 For Jesus by his love.”

Carry with you in your hearts, then, the
 Saviour's words: “If ye love me, keep my
 commandments.”



Seed-Sowing.

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"Behold, a sower went forth to sow."—MATT. xiii. 3.

CHAPTER X.

SEED-SOWING.

WHEN Jesus gave to the people the parable of the sower he was seated in a boat that was floating on the Sea of Galilee. The boat lay quite near the shore, while all along the beach and up the banks stood the many people who had come to hear him.

In his discourse on that occasion he represented the world as a field containing four kinds of ground. The first was the footpath that crossed the field, rendered so hard by the tread of those who were continually walking on it, that the scattered grain which happened to fall upon it could not take root, and was either trodden to pieces or picked up by the birds. Then the rock that was harder still. Then the places that were all covered with thorns. And

then the good, mellow soil, in which the seed would be sure to take root and grow.

By the sower he meant himself and every one who teaches others the truth as he did; by the seed he meant the gospel; and by the field, with its four kinds of ground, he meant the hearts of men.

You have perhaps seen the farmer, after the ground has been ploughed and harrowed, walking along from one end of the field to the other, thrusting his hand into the bag of grain that hangs from his shoulder, and flinging it, now to the right and then to the left, keeping time with his regular, measured step. It is a sight we all love, because it reminds us of the golden harvest in which our heavenly Father gives his earthly children their daily bread.

We will suppose it to be the early spring-time, when the trees are putting on new leaves and blossoms, and the grass is making the meadows look green again, after the snow and cold of winter have passed away. The

streams that were ice-bound have been let loose once more, and are as happy as streams can be. The birds are singing, and begin to think seriously of building their nests, if they have not already commenced.

After the seed is all sown and the harrow has covered it with the mellow, warm earth, you see the birds hopping along by the fences and picking up the kernels which the harrow has not hidden under the ground. In a few days the grain begins to sprout and the brown soil looks as if some one had thrown upon it a rich carpet more beautiful than silk or velvet. But soon you notice patches of weeds, growing so thickly that the product of the good seed dies before it ripens, and you see here and there spots that look yellow and sickly, and when you examine these spots you find only a thin layer of soil, with a hard rock beneath.

Now, I wonder which kind of ground your heart is like? If you never learn anything good, it is like the beaten footpath. If you

resolve to do right, and actually begin, and then forget all your good resolutions, it is like the thin soil upon the hard rock. If you give way to temptation, and allow evil thoughts to overcome those that are pure, it is like the places covered with thorns. If you love the truth—love to hear it and love to practice it—why, then your heart is like the good ground that brings forth thirty, sixty or a hundred fold.

Suppose your own heart to be a garden in which the Saviour has scattered precious seed. In this one garden—this single heart of yours—there may be rocks and thorns and hard footpaths and good, rich soil. And you have been appointed to take care of this garden. How are you to manage it, then, so that the good seed will grow in every part? Listen to a few simple rules.

First, the rocks must be broken and taken away; the hard places in your heart which will not allow the seed to grow must be softened and mellowed. In the heart of the

burning mountain the rocks are sometimes melted and flow down into the valley, and there make a rich, fruitful soil. So when your heart is melted by the love of Jesus, all good and lovely things will grow there.

I have a friend who has a beautiful lawn in front of his house, spreading into many acres. Jutting out from the very centre of this lawn, a few years ago, was a huge rock covered with a thin layer of earth, on which the grass grew shyly. Not liking this, and determined that the grass should have fair play, my friend set men at work, and they drilled the rock and blasted it, and after much labor and great expense the rock was carted away and soil was put in its place. Now you may see a large tree growing there, with flower beds, and grass that is strong and resolute because its roots are properly nourished. You cannot, without help, break the rock that is in your heart, but the Saviour will do it for you if you ask and do not hinder him. Then you will not only hear

his words, but you will obey them, and they will bloom into words just like his—words of love, words of gentleness; then these words, like the blossoms of the tree, will grow into something else—fruit; they will become loving, Christ-like deeds.

But besides this, you must not rest until the thorns are all rooted out. All feelings and thoughts that injure the truth when it is beginning to grow in your soul must be pulled up and thrown away.

You have your cares and pleasures. You are troubled about many things, are out of humor many times a day, perhaps, and thus show that you are troubled. The young have their own anxieties, crosses, disappointments, as well as those who are older. The love of fun is not always innocent. Sometimes you are tempted to tantalize others, or to do them wrong in some other way, in order to have a good hearty laugh at their expense. All such unkind and impatient feelings and evil thoughts will certainly de-

stroy the precious seed if you allow them to remain. So you must begin this *weed-pulling* at once, and continue it daily, if you would not have the truth crowded out of your mind.

When I was a boy, says one who tells the story, I had a Sunday-school teacher who was always ready to drop a word in season. No matter what we were talking about at first, it seemed to be the easiest thing in the world for her to turn my thoughts Christward. She would find sermons in stones, and in almost everything else. They were not long, tiresome sermons, but just a word that would keep me thinking till the next time I met her.

I remember one vacation she went away for a few weeks. When she came back, I ran to see her. After a pleasant talk, she said, just as I started for home, "Well, Charlie, what have you been doing the past week?"

"Pulling weeds for father," I answered.

"Pulling weeds? That is good business," said she, with a smile; "but I hope those you pulled were not all for father. You have a garden of your own, you know, and the weeds are apt to grow there too."

"A garden of my own?" I questioned, not thinking at first what she meant.

"Yes, and it is here," she said, touching her side with her finger. "The enemy that sowed them is the evil one. Have you pulled up the weeds there? It is hard work, Charlie—harder than pulling for father—but Christ will help you, and make it all easy."

Day after day, as I kept about my tasks, I thought sadly of the weeds in the garden of my heart, and I asked Christ to root them out by his gracious power.

You know how it is in an ordinary garden—how much faster the weeds grow than anything else if you do not disturb them. Last summer, when the ground was dry, and the beds were all clean, and I thought the tomatoes and corn and other useful plants

had got rid of all their enemies, and had nothing to do but to grow, I longed for a plentiful shower, because I knew they were thirsty, and could not grow as they should until the clouds had sprinkled the rain upon them. Well, one night the shower came, and went trickling through the soil into every little open plant-mouth that was gasping for want of drink. Early the next morning I looked out of the window, and what do you think I saw? Every bed that had been scraped with the hoe until nothing seemed left but what was useful was thickly covered with young weeds that had only been waiting for the rain to soften the earth to creep out of their hiding-places. I could not pull them that day, nor the next, and by the time I was ready to root them out they had grown above everything else. Yes, and in growing they had eaten nearly all the fatness of the soil, and kept the useful plants small and weak. Pull the weeds when they are young. Do not allow a single wrong

feeling or thought to remain a moment in your soul.

You want me to tell you why the weeds grow more easily and rapidly than the good seed—why wrong feelings and thoughts are so strong and right ones so weak. It is because the weeds are at home in the soul, and the good seed is not. The weeds will grow without any planting, but the good seed must be sown and watched and protected. Bad tempers grow naturally: it is the good ones that require planting and watchfulness and labor.

If you would have a profitable garden, where all that is useful and beautiful will grow luxuriantly, you must root out the weeds and have good soil in the place of the rocks. Remember this lesson.

Remember still another thing. Be very careful *what sort of seed you plant*.

You are planting every day—good seed and bad, perhaps, for it would be a wonder indeed if the bad were never mixed with the

good. I once saw a wheat-field with a few Canada thistles in it, scattered here and there—so few that they did not attract the notice of the owner of the field; wheat and thistles were cut down together, and sown together the next year, and the new crop of wheat was almost destroyed.

Here is a little heart-garden; let us see what has been planted there.

Bessie had just received a present of a new book, and she eagerly opened it to look at the first picture. It was the picture of a boy sitting by the side of a stream and throwing seeds into the water.

“I wonder what this picture is about?” said she. “Why does the boy throw seeds into the water?”

“Oh, I know,” said her brother, who had been looking at the book; “he is sowing the seeds of water-lilies.”

“But how small the seeds look!” said Bessie. “It seems strange that such large plants should grow from such small things.”

"You are sowing such tiny seeds every day, Bessie, and they will come up large strong plants after a while," said her father.

"Oh no, father, I have not planted any seeds for a long time."

"But I have seen my daughter planting the seeds of both weeds and flowers since morning."

Bessie looked puzzled, and her father smiled and said: "I will tell you what I mean. When you laid aside that interesting book and attended to what your mother wished done, you were sowing seeds of kindness and love. When you broke the dish that you knew your mother valued, and came instantly and told her, you were sowing the seeds of truth. When you took the cup of cold water to the poor woman at the gate, you were sowing seeds of mercy. These are all beautiful flowers, Bessie. And I hope you have been planting the great tree of love to God, and that you will tend and watch it until its branches reach the skies."

"And the weeds, father?" inquired Bessie.

"When you were impatient with baby, you sowed the seeds of ill-temper. When you waited some time after your mother called you, you sowed disobedience and selfishness. These are all noxious weeds. Pull them up. Do not let them grow in your garden."

That was excellent advice from a father to a daughter who seemed striving to have her heart-garden in the best possible order. Every one has to eat of the fruit of his own doings, and if nothing comes from his planting but impatience and anger and self-will, he has very lean fare.

Then we are to remember that the garden we cultivate is for others as well as ourselves.

You love to exhibit the sweet flowers that line the garden-paths or grow in beds, and to cull from them a nosegay for the friend who admires their beauty. A story is told of three children who were rambling on a beautiful spring day over the fields, and

busied themselves in gathering the flowers that pleased them most. One selected the violet as the first-born child of spring and the emblem of modesty. Another selected the lily as the emblem of innocence and of a pure heart. The third culled the little blue forget-me-not as the emblem of gentleness and love. And when they all met again they wreathed their flowers into two garlands—love, innocence and modesty twined together—and then crowned their parents with these gifts of their affection. The mother was heard to say, “A garland like this is more splendid than the diadem of a king.”

There is no telling what bright and beautiful things we may cause to grow along the pathway of others, which will help to make them good and glad and great, if we only plant the right kind of seed.

A mother once planted a kiss, and there grew out of it an artist. It happened thus: A little boy named Benjamin West was set

to watch a baby that was asleep in a cradle. He looked at it kindly, and felt pleased to see it smile in its sleep, and the sweet smile, or something else, made him wish that he could draw a picture of the baby. Seeing a piece of paper on a table, with pen and ink, he tried what he could do. When his mother came in he begged her not to be angry with him for touching the pen, ink and paper, and then showed her the picture he had made. His mother saw the baby's likeness, and was so much pleased that she kissed her little boy. Then he said that if she liked it he would make a picture of some flowers she held in her hand. So he went on from that time, trying to do better and better, until he became one of the best painters in the world. In after life he said that it was this kiss from his mother that made him an artist.

This mother did not imagine what the fruit of that kiss would be. Thus the good seeds we sow—the pleasant smiles, the kind

words, the generous deeds—are growing in the hearts and lives of others, making them better and happier, whilst we do not dream that they are growing at all. This should prompt you always to speak kindly and act nobly, for in the hearts around you your words and deeds will surely fall and take root.

Some travelers sailing up one of the great rivers of America observed along the coast, at a distance of many miles, as they supposed, from human habitations, vines of a choice character in full fruit. The explanation of the mystery was this: One person living by the side of the river took great pains with the cultivation of his vines, and the twigs and cuttings which he threw away had been carried down the stream, and taking root where they lodged, had been the means of providing these luscious clusters for the weary travelers. So it is with good words and deeds. They take root, often, far away from the spot where they were spoken and

performed, like the words and deeds of the Saviour that are now bearing rich fruit, on which the souls of men are feeding all over the world.

I have said that you must be very careful what sort of seed you plant, both for your own sake and the sake of others. But there is another reason. The fruit will always be like the seed. A bramble-bush never yet produced figs or grapes. If you sow industry, it will not produce want, and if you sow idleness, it will not produce learning or wealth or skill, or anything else that is desirable.

So two boys found it who were apprentices in a carpenter's shop. One determined to make himself a thorough workman; the other had no thought or purpose of the kind. One read and studied books that would help him understand the principles of his trade, and spent his evenings at home in this way. The other liked fun best. "Come," he often said to his shopmate; "leave your old

books and go with us. What's the use of all this reading?"

"If I waste these golden moments," was the answer, "I shall lose what I can never make up."

While the boys were still apprentices an offer of two thousand dollars appeared in the newspapers for the best plan of a State-house to be built in one of the Eastern States. The studious boy saw the advertisement, and determined to try for the prize. After careful study he drew out his plans and sent them to the committee. In about a week afterward a gentleman arrived at the carpenter's shop, and inquired if an architect by the name of Washington Wilberforce lived there.

"No," said the carpenter; "there is no architect here, but I have an apprentice by that name."

"Let me see him," said the gentleman.

The young man was summoned, and informed that *his* plan had been accepted, and

that the two thousand dollars were his. The gentleman then said that the boy must put up the building, and his employer was so proud of his success that he willingly gave him his time and let him go. This studious young carpenter became one of the first architects in our country.

I have spoken of kind tempers and gentle, loving words as seed that will be sure to produce good fruit. That you understand, for you have seen the fruit and tasted it, and, I trust, have planted some of the seed too. But what would you think of planting a gold dollar? Would that grow and bear fruit just as certainly as the seed of the apple or the pear? Willie Mason once asked that question, and was told that his gold dollar would be sure to grow if he only planted it right. So without waiting for any explanation, he planted it in the garden, and wondered whether it would be a large tree or only a little bush, but, whether tree or bush, he expected that bright gold

dollars would hang on all the branches. He did not study much that day, for he kept thinking of his golden crop, and how much it would enable him to do for his father and mother, as well as for his sisters and himself, and at night he dreamed about it. Day after day he watered the golden seed, and at length, becoming somewhat impatient, he scratched away the ground to see whether it had sprouted, when a merry laugh from the window revealed to him his mistake. He had not planted his gold dollar right.

That afternoon Willie went with his mother to see poor Biddy, whose two boys were not going to school because she could not purchase the books they needed. Then Willie began to perceive where he might plant his money so that it would grow and bear the best kind of fruit. On their way home he and his mother talked pleasantly about the matter, and Willie laughed at himself when he thought how foolish he had been to suppose that by hiding his money in

the earth it would multiply or increase in value.

I cannot tell you how gladly the books which he purchased were received by Biddy and her sons, or of the good they did, but can assure you that Willie was far happier than he would have been if the first planting had yielded him what he expected, and the second one had been unthought of.

Thus you are planting when you give your money to send the gospel to those who have it not, or when in any way you help the needy, whether it be by sending them books or bread.

Root out the weeds, break the rock and sow the precious seed of love to God and man. This is your work, hard in itself, but easy when the Saviour's hand is upon yours to guide you in its performance—easy when the seed has been scattered in your own soul by the Saviour himself, and is growing there into faith and meekness and forbearance, and all beautiful tempers.

Let me say here that the seed must grow in your own soul and life before you can plant it in the souls and lives of others. You must be kind and gentle and believing before you can make others so.

The seed that Jesus is scattering whenever you read or hear his word, whenever you listen to those who would lead you to him, whenever you see a life that is full of purity and love,—where does it fall when it enters your mind? among the weeds? or on the rock? or in good ground where it will be sure to take root and grow? You have heard of God's love to you; you see it when you rise in the morning and when you lie down at night. You see it in the stars and in the flowers, and you see it in the cross on which the Saviour died. This is the sowing. And oh what large and perfect fruit it ought to yield! God so loved you that he sent his Son to save you. Do not allow seed like that to be choked by the love of the world—by the love of sin. And if it has

begun to grow, do not let it become scorched and withered because your feeling is no deeper than the sand that hardly covers the solid rock beneath. With such culture as you have had you ought to be the warm friend of Jesus now. If this fruit of his sowing has not appeared, it must be that the seed has fallen upon the rock or among the thorns.

Watch over this seed ; pray over it ; take good care of it, or it will perish, and you will perish too.

“ Work with fervor, work with patience,
In the garden of thy heart ;
Then the seeds of love and kindness
Into luscious fruit will start. ”

“ Then sweet words, and noble doing,
Sown in youth's and childhood's day,
Rooted by Christ's tender wooing,
Will keep noxious weeds away. ”

In Simon's House.

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head as he sat at meat."—
MATT. xxvi. 6, 7.

CHAPTER XI.

IN SIMON'S HOUSE.

BETHANY was a village about two miles from Jerusalem, just over the Mount of Olives, and on the way to Jericho. Here Martha and Mary dwelt with their brother Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. It was a pleasant walk from Jerusalem to Bethany, and very often the Saviour went there to visit the friends whom he loved so dearly.

Other friends he also had in this retired spot, among whom was a man named Simon, once a leper, whom Jesus, it may be, had cured. This Simon invited Jesus to supper one day, and we are told that Lazarus and his sisters were also there. They were probably relatives of Simon, or at least very intimate acquaintances, for Martha, the busy

housekeeper of her brother's small family, waited on the guests. Mary, too, was there, and brought a vase of alabaster full of costly perfume. The vase itself was beautiful, for it was made of a beautiful stone finer than marble, though not unlike it, often of a snowy whiteness, through which the light shines when you hold it up to a candle or the sun. Not long ago I was in a mountain cave, and saw hanging from the roof long cones that looked like immense icicles, and when we held our torches behind them they became as bright as the moon. Out of such material was the box formed in which Mary carried the precious ointment.

What did Mary do with the ointment? Matthew says she poured it on the head of Jesus, and John says that she also anointed his feet with it, and then wiped them with her hair. Oh how she loved! But did she not do more than her love required her to do? Some who were present thought that to spend so much money for such a purpose



Wm. Smith, del.

Stalactites in the Cave.

was a great waste. But Jesus thought otherwise, and declared that in doing all she could to show her love for him Mary had acted wisely and well.

The lesson I want you to learn now is this. You are to do all you can for the Saviour, to bring to him what costs you something, and what you value most.

Do all you can, just like the rain-drop or the sunbeam. You will not tell me you can do nothing, when God has not only given you hands and feet to work with, but also a mind with which to think, and a soul with which to feel and love. I have told you about the beautiful alabaster cones in the mountain cave, but I have not told you all that may be seen there. These cones sometimes reach down to the floor, where they are likewise coniform, the two extremes being united by a comparatively slender thread of the same material that reminds you of a harp-string; and when several of these are found near each other it is easy to imagine that

you are in the abode of the fairies, and that this is the instrument on which they play. Now, who made these beautiful ornaments, some of which are heavier than a whole company of boys and girls could carry with their united strength? And who placed them in the mountain cave? Why, the little rain-drops, of course, millions of them at work at once through hundreds of years as often as they came down from the clouds. Whenever it rained, each drop washed as many particles as it could from the limestone rocks that formed the arched roof of the cave, and trickling through the cracks, left a few of these particles clinging to the roof, and then others were added; and so the work went on until it grew into these massive forms. Of each drop we might say, "It did what it could."

You have read about the islands of the sea that are formed entirely of coral, and you know that the coral is composed of the skeletons of countless millions of very minute

animals that seem to live only for this purpose. In the building of these islands—which in the Pacific Ocean alone extend along a line of more than four thousand miles in length, and some of which are forty or fifty miles in diameter—each little builder does what it can. This is the rule you are to follow, and if you follow this rule you will never be at a loss for something to do that Jesus will approve of.

President Lincoln, walking with his secretary one day, stopped at a little bush and looked into it, then stooped down and put his hands through the leaves and twigs as if to take something out.

“What do you find there, Mr. President?” asked his companion.

“There is a little bird fallen from its nest,” replied the President, “and I am trying to put it back again.”

Just at that moment he was doing what he could for one of God's creatures. And I do not suppose he was at all troubled by

the thought that the act was a very small and insignificant one. To the rescued bird it was as important as it would have been to a rescued child.

“Let us be content in work
To do the thing we can, and not presume
To fret because it's little. 'Twill employ
Seven men, they say, to make a perfect pin :
Who makes the point agrees to leave the head ;
And if a man should cry, ‘I want a pin,
And I must make it straightway, head and point,’
His wisdom is not worth the pin he wants.”

Do what you can. Do not wait for what are called great opportunities before you begin. Every opportunity is great that God puts in your way, if it be only that of lifting a fallen bird from the ground and restoring it to its nest, or making the point or head of a pin.

“Oh dear!” said Nelly, with a sigh, as she closed the book she was reading; “if I were only rich!”

“What then?” asked her mother.

“Why, mother, I would do so much good ;

I would give all the poor people money and clothes, and all my friends such beautiful gifts, just like the lady I have been reading about. But one can't do anything when one is poor;" and Nelly gave a deeper sigh.

"Why, Nelly, can't you do anything? Perhaps you could do more now than if you were rich."

"How is that, mother?" said Nelly, with a surprised look that said plainly, "Money is power."

"I will tell you, daughter. One day a young soldier lay intoxicated on the steps of a house in a large city. He had come from his home in the country to join a regiment, and fell a victim to the poisonous cup. There he lay without a friend in the large city to counsel him. Just then a little girl was passing on her way to school, and saw him. She thought she would like to do something for him. So she went and touched him softly on the arm. He started, looked at her, and said, 'What do you want?'

“‘Oh, I feel so sorry for you ; and mother would feel so sad if it was brother Willie.’

“That touched the right chord in his heart. Memories of home, of mother and sister, perhaps praying for him then, rushed through his mind, and he resolved to be a man. And he kept that resolve. There, you see, daughter, money was not needed, but in that little girl’s heart were treasures money could not buy.”

“Mother, I wish I had those treasures in my heart,” said Nelly.

“You may have them,” replied her mother ; “only ask, and you will receive. Jesus only can change the heart and make it a fit dwelling for kind thoughts that speak in loving words full of sympathy, which are of more value than all the costly gifts money can buy.”

Nelly’s prayer now is, not for riches, but for a heart to do the will of her heavenly Father.

This story shows how much good may be

accomplished by performing the duty that lies right before us. Here was something a little girl had the power to do, and she did it. There were other things she had not the power to do, and these she did not attempt. She could not hire a carriage and send the poor, friendless young soldier to a hotel and pay his board there, or take him to his mother, but she could touch his arm and tell him how sorry she felt for him—just what any one of you could have done if you had been in her place—and that touch and those words did more for the young man than money alone would have done.

A few years ago I used to visit an orphan school quite frequently, and especially a member of the school who was confined to her room by sickness. She loved her Saviour, and was passionately fond of flowers. These were sent to her every day by a young friend almost as poor and dependent as herself, who went to the woods where they were free to all, and gathered them with her own hand.

I remember well the joy that sparkled in the eye of the invalid as often as it fell upon the fresh and fragrant little nosegay that rested in the vase at her side. To her mind it was like precious ointment. Do what you can, if you can only cull flowers to cheer those who cannot gather them for themselves.

The Saviour often imparts great power to the words and actions of children, and enables them to do what those who are older, and in some respects wiser, have tried in vain to accomplish.

A man was one day leaning, much intoxicated, against a tree. Some little girls coming from school saw him there, and at once said to each other, "What shall we do for him?"

Presently said one, "Oh, I'll tell you—let's sing him a temperance song." And so they did. Collecting around him, they sang:

"Away the bowl, away the bowl,"

and so on, in beautiful tones.

The poor fellow enjoyed the singing, and when they had finished that song said, "Sing again, little girls, sing again."

"We will," they said, "if you will sign the temperance pledge."

"No, no; we are not at a temperance meeting; there are no pledges here."

"I have a pledge," cried one; and, "I have a pencil," cried another; and holding up the pledge and pencil, they besought him to sign it.

"No, no; I won't sign it now. Sing for me."

So they sang again—

"The drink that's in the drunkard's bowl
Is not the drink for me,"

"Oh, do sing that again," said he as he wiped the tears from his eyes.

"No, no more," said they, "unless you'll sign the pledge; sign, and we'll sing it for you."

He plead for the singing, but they were

firm, and declared they would go away if he would not sign.

“But,” said the poor fellow, striving to find an excuse, “there’s no table here: how can I write without a table?”

At this, a modest, quiet, pretty little creature, with a pleasant smile on her lips, came and said, “Yes, you can spread the pledge on the crown of your hat, and I will hold it for you.”

Off came the hat, the child held it, the pledge was signed, and the little ones burst out with—

“Oh, water for me, bright water for me,
Give wine to the tremulous debauchee.”

I heard that man in Worcester town hall, says Mr. Gough, who tells the story, with uplifted hands and quivering lips say, “I thank God for the sympathy of those children. I shall thank God to all eternity that he sent those little children as messengers of mercy to me.”

A minister of the gospel, relating his own

experience, tells us that when first urged by conscience to preach he shrank from the duty. There was a long, hard struggle between conscience and timidity, and the latter almost carried the day. He had nearly persuaded himself that God must have some other field of labor for him. In this nervous and hesitating frame of mind he was walking, meditating, praying, and about to yield to his weaker feelings, when he came by a group of children playing at the roadside. Suddenly one of them jumped up and sang the words,

“My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To speak through all the earth abroad,
The honors of thy name.”

And then the child resumed her play, little conscious of what she had done. From that moment he was decided. All doubt left his mind. And whatever good he afterward accomplished in the pulpit he ascribed, under God, to the simple hymn of that child.

Do all you can to show your love for Jesus. Children have great power, and they ought to use it in this way. This is a busy world, in which there is much to be done, and to every creature and every force he has made God has entrusted a portion of the work. For the most part each is doing what it can. The rosebud struggling into bloom seems to say to the Being who created it, "Oh how I love thy law!" And so does the rain-drop when it falls to the earth and carries to the buried seed just what it wants to make it grow. What is your share of the work that is to be done for God? You could not take the place of the rain-drop or of the sunbeam if you would. When you look around and see what the trees are doing, and the clouds, it would be well for each of you to ask the question, "What was I made for?"

"God made the little bird to sing
Up in the tree so tall;
He made the castled snail to cling
Close to the garden wall.

“He made the flowers to charm the eye,
And scent the air around ;
He made the tree so broad and high,
To shadow all the ground.

“He made the moon to cheer the night,
And yon dark sky adorn ;
He made the sun so warm and bright,
To ripen well the corn.

“You cannot twinkle like a star,
Or blossom like the flowers,
But God has made you greater far,
And given you noble powers.”

And therefore, with affection, reason and knowledge to guide you, are you to do nobler work for him. And you are to do it earnestly. You are to do it with all your might. You are to do all you can—just as much more than the bee or the ant as you are greater than either, and greater than all put together. You may imitate these in the heartiness with which they perform God's will, but you cannot measure what God requires of you by what he requires of them. God has made you but a little lower than the angels, and therefore you 'have angels'

errands to perform, or something very like them. You sometimes sing,

“ I want to be an angel.”

That is all very well if you do not think that you must wait until you die before you *can* be one. You can be an angel now if you choose to be, and have wings, too—wings of love, wings of mercy—feelings in your heart that will carry you very swiftly while you are doing angels’ work.

I have heard children sing those words, and have then seen them turn round and work for Satan, as if they thought the time to be an angel had not come. I have seen children with these words upon their lips whilst with their hands they were pinching their neighbors, or doing some other mean thing which I am very sure an angel would not think of doing. This waiting until you die to be an angel is very unwise, for if you are not one before that, you never will be, I fear.

An angel is a messenger—one who is sent

to do the will of another—and God's angels are his messengers, sent to do his bidding. So when I see little children with the love of Jesus in their hearts showing that love in their actions, I have a right to count them among the angels too. Those girls who prevailed upon the poor drunkard to sign the pledge were God's messengers to him. The songs they sung to him were songs of peace and good-will, like those which brought joy to the shepherds on the plains of Bethlehem.

If you *want* to be an angel, be one now, and go on wings of love to do the will of Jesus.

Where shall you begin? In your own heart, if that is most convenient. There is work enough to be done for the Saviour there. Make room for him, so that he may have the best place. Drive out evil thoughts and unkind tempers. Sit at his feet, as Mary did on another occasion, and hear what he has to say to you. Then lead some one else

to Jesus. You need not be idle a single hour or moment, and if you do what you can you will not be.

Bring to the Saviour what costs you something, and what you value most. Mary brought the precious ointment for which she paid a large sum. Duty often requires effort or sacrifice of some kind. It is not always as easy as was the singing of the hymn that fixed the purpose of the man who was trying to silence conscience. There are many opportunities of doing good that thus come in our way, but others have to be sought, and we must turn aside and go after them or they will never be ours. Now, there are many who are ready to do pleasant things, and kind things, and things that are useful, as long as it is mere play, or does not cost any more effort than if it was. But where sacrifice and resolution begin their well-doing ends.

I have walked more than once along the banks of the Delaware where it is so small

a stream that you could almost leap over it. And how do you think it runs? Not in a straight line, but zigzag, first in one direction and then in the other, making a beautiful curve at every turn, as if it were anxious to make the whole valley green from side to side. That is just what it does. You must be like that river if you would do all the good you can. Bring to the Saviour, I say, what costs you something; bring him the best you have. That gift is of little value on which you have bestowed no expenditure. Think nothing too hard, nothing too precious, to be done for him. Never say "I can't" in his service. Those are evil words, and always stand in the way of usefulness. If Christ gives you strength, you can do all things that are right and pure.

In a gallery of paintings in the old city of Antwerp a group of people gathered around a young man who was making a copy of one of Rubens' pictures. The work was beautiful, but the workman had neither hands

nor arms to manage his brush. He held it with his toes, and used it skillfully. Now, it is not natural, nor is it easy, thus to guide a small brush carefully and delicately with the foot, and almost any one with no arms would have said, "I can't paint," but he said, "I can," and so he did.

Some months ago there was exhibited in New York a picture called the "Rat Catcher." It represents a man and four dogs watching for rats, and is considered a very beautiful work of art. And who was the artist? A man who had neither arms, nor hands, nor feet, with which to hold his brush. He was an uneducated man, with no knowledge of art, but on his back, with brush held in his mouth and guided by his lips and tongue, the paper being fastened in a frame over his face, he executed this beautiful picture. Try. That is the word.

The mills had stopped, and a Sunday-school teacher had lost every scholar but one. So she said to that one, "I will give

you a bit of work to do for Jesus. Try this week to find somebody to join our class. Are you not acquainted with some children who go to school, and would love to come to ours and be led to the Saviour?"

Oh yes, she knew many, and promised to try, but was afraid she would not succeed. She was afraid, and therefore did not try, and brought no one in. Sarah Colt *did* try. When only eleven years old she gathered some of the mill children together in Paterson, New Jersey, and taught them from Sunday to Sunday, until she had as many as sixty scholars under her care. And not long ago, when she had become old, four thousand teachers and scholars marched by her house singing their best and sweetest songs.

What, then, will you do for Jesus? Will you not bring him the best you have—the thing you value most? The first thing to give him is your heart—your love—and then the precious ointment, or whatever else

will best express that love, will come too.
But begin to do something for him.

"I cannot do much," said a little star,
 "To make the dark world bright;
My little beams cannot struggle far
 Through the folding gloom of night.
But I am a part of God's great plan,
And I'll cheerfully do the best that I can."

"What is the use," said a fleecy cloud,
 "Of those dew-drops that I hold?
They will hardly bend the lily proud,
 Though caught in her cup of gold.
Yet I am a part of God's great plan:
My treasure I'll give as well as I can."

A child went merrily forth to play,
 But a thought, like a silver thread,
Kept winding in and out all day
 Through the happy, busy head.
Mother said, "Darling, do all you can,
For you are a part of God's great plan."

So she helped a younger child along
 When the road was rough to the feet,
And she sang from her heart a little song—
 A song that was passing sweet;
And her father, a weary, toil-worn man,
Said, "I also will do the best that I can."

Among the Five Thousand.

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“ There is a lad here which hath five barley-loaves and two small fishes ; but what are they among so many ? ”—JOHN vi. 9.

CHAPTER XII.

AMONG THE FIVE THOUSAND.

WHERE was this lad?

He was near the lake of Tiberias, at its northern extremity, on one of the hill-slopes that rise so beautifully from the shore. It was the afternoon of a spring day. The grass was long and soft, and the sun was sinking toward the western mountains. From the spot where he stood, it may be, he could look down upon the lake, and see the smooth current on its surface that marked the passage of the Jordan. Hills rose on every hand, with vineyards here and there climbing up their sides, and at the west lay a fruitful plain with its pastures and grain-fields.

But the lad was not alone. Jesus was there with his disciples, having come by

water from Capernaum. And no less than five thousand men, together with women and children, had followed him by land.

The Saviour wanted to be alone, but he was not offended when he saw this large multitude of people, because he knew he could do them good. So he healed the sick friends whom they had brought along with them, and late in the day he told his disciples to give them something to eat before they went back to their homes. But to feed so many would have cost more money than they had, and even if the money had been at their command, it would have been necessary to go to the neighboring villages in order to buy what was needed, and for this there was no time. The shadows of evening were already beginning to fall. Philip said the thing could not be done, whilst Andrew endeavored to show that Philip was right.

“There is a lad here,” said he, “who has five barley-loaves and two small fishes, but what are they among so many?”

And what did Jesus say to all this? He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and had them arranged in groups, so that the space occupied by each party was in the form of a square, like a garden plot, as the word means. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them and brake them, and gave them to his disciples, and the disciples gave them to the multitude, and they all ate until they were satisfied. After this hearty and abundant meal the disciples gathered what remained, that there might be no waste, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley-loaves.

Thus by his own power did Jesus multiply the bread as it passed out of his hand. He began with one basketful and ended with twelve, and fed thousands besides. God performs wonders *in nature* every day when he causes the seed to grow, and thus provides daily bread for the millions who are fed by his bounty, but that was a greater

wonder, because it was *supernatural—above* nature.

I will tell you more about this after we have learned some of the other lessons that come to us through this miracle.

You remember that *Jesus blessed the loaves* before he brake them, and that was the same as giving thanks. This, you may say, was the greatest of all wonders, that He who had such power looked up to heaven as if he were dependent. But this is a greater wonder—that we who *are* dependent often fail to look up to heaven, and are as thankless as if all our blessings were our own. It is safe to say that Jesus never sat down at table without lifting his voice in prayer, and in this he taught us how we ought to receive the gifts of our heavenly Father.

It is related that on a certain occasion an English ship-of-war touched at one of the ports of the Sandwich Islands, and that the captain gave a dinner to the royal family of the islands and several chiefs. The table

was spread upon the quarter-deck, and loaded with viands and delicacies of all kinds. After the company were seated and the covers were removed, the islanders seemed in no haste to begin to eat, but looked as though something else was expected. The captain thought the trouble was with the food—that it was not what they liked, or that it had been prepared in a manner to which they were unaccustomed, and accordingly commenced apologizing for it. He had, however, a pious waiter, who stood behind his chair, and quickly discovering what the obstacle was, whispered to the captain, “These persons are waiting for a blessing to be asked.”

“Ask it, then,” said the captain to the waiter, who was a pious man.

The waiter did so, reverently and gratefully imploring the divine benediction. No sooner was this done than Queen Pomare, her family and the chiefs showed that their appetites were not at fault, and that the dinner suited them exactly. They had learned

from the Saviour that the bread should be blessed before it is broken.

An old proverb says, "He that enjoys aught without thanksgiving is as though he robbed God." I fear there is a great deal of this robbery going on, this thankless snatching of God's gifts out of his hand without any acknowledgment of his care and love. That is a very mean way of dealing with boundless and constant generosity, to say the least of it.

And then, when we are guilty of such unthankfulness, we rob ourselves of the satisfaction there is in knowing and feeling that an omnipotent Hand supplies all our need. When we give thanks at our meals, we ask God to make our food a blessing to us beyond and above the support of the physical life. We ask that it may awaken affection and trust in the soul. Thus we might have constant joy if we would only give thanks—thanks for life, for daily bread, for loving friends, for trees, and flowers,

and birds—thanks for everything that God sends.

A little boy, not as large, I think, as the one who had the five barley-loaves and the two fishes, was visiting not long ago in the country. There were many guests, and the children had a separate table. While waiting for a blessing to be asked he noticed that the eating had commenced.

“Why don’t you *pray*?” he exclaimed, surprised out of his politeness.

“Well, Wattie, suppose *you* pray,” was the reply.

It was an unexpected turn of affairs, but he was equal to the occasion.

“The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want: for Jesus Christ’s sake, amen,” he said, promptly and devoutly.

Was it not beautiful? How direct and practical the application of a favorite verse! How close the connection between the good things spread upon the table for his enjoyment and the watchful care of the heavenly

Shepherd who is ready to feed the soul as well as the body !

We are told that even the trees clap their hands, and that the hills are joyful before the Lord. The trees have not such hands as yours, nor the hills such voices, yet they appear glad in their quiet beauty. When after a warm, gentle rain you look at the flower that has been drooping, and notice how it lifts its face toward heaven to catch the refreshing drops, does it not seem to you as if it were giving thanks for the great blessing ? So it seems to me. I never hear the birds sing at early dawn—a thousand or more together—as if their little hearts would burst with happiness, but I think of their song as a song of thanksgiving. Happy birds ! happy flowers ! because never *thankless* ! They have not human love, and cannot, therefore, be thankful as we are, or ought to be, but they have a way of their own which it would be well for us to have. They impart as gladly as they accept, and

what better way is there of expressing thanks than that?

“From all thy works, dear Father,
 Something thou dost receive;
 Some fragrance thou may'st gather;
 Some homage each can give;
My gratitude must rather
 In grateful loving live.

“Thy little bird will sing thee
 The blithest song it knows;
 Thy little flower will fling thee
 The sweetest scent that blows;
 Thy little child will bring thee
 A heart that overflows.”

Ask God's blessing upon the bread before you break it—that is the first lesson.

The second is, *God can bring much out of little*, as he is doing every day when he causes the one seed to produce a hundred or more, and the hundred, ten thousand, and the ten thousand, a million; so that at the third planting the one seed is multiplied a million times. God can and does thus multiply good words and actions, even those that seem to us very small and

unimportant, and brings out of circumstances that appear trivial to us the most surprising and desirable results. One day an apple fell from a tree, and Newton inferred from this incident the great law that holds the planets in their places and causes them to move regularly and unceasingly round the sun. So also do great blessings spring from small acts of love.

There was lately seen at a jeweler's in Paris a small brooch set with brilliants of considerable value. Within it, upon an enameled ground, were enclosed four old brass pins, crooked and rusty. And what is the history of this strange ornament? Years ago an unfortunate nobleman was plunged into a dark dungeon for his political opinions. Days, weeks, months, passed away, and the prisoner, thus snatched from his friends and his occupations, buried in silence and obscurity, soon began to feel his body waste away and his mind wandering. Searched from head to foot by those who

had thrown him there, it chanced that in his dress had remained four pins which escaped the examination. They suggested to him a mode of employing his time and thoughts in this terrible solitude. He threw the pins from him hap-hazard in his dungeon, and, once scattered, set himself to work to find them. When found, he threw them from him again, and so on, and on, and on. He often consumed two or three days, sitting, kneeling or stretched on the ground, before he succeeded in picking them all up. This lasted for six years. A grand political event then restored to the count his liberty, but he would not quit his cell without carrying with him these instruments that had saved his reason. And when he found himself in the midst of his children—left at so tender an age that he recognized them only through the eyes of his heart—he related his touching story, and showed to them, all weeping with sympathy and joy, the four pins to which he was indebted for his reason, per-

haps for his life. These wonderful pins his wife has had set in ten thousand francs' worth of diamonds, that she may bear about with her so strange and affecting a memorial. But the pins are worth unspeakably more to her than the diamonds that surround them. Thus God cared for this persecuted man. By means of an instrumentality so small he saved his reason and his life.

We are not conscious of the manner in which God often brings multiplied blessings to us through those incidents of our own lives that are too small to attract our notice. The sight of a flower or a smile may have brought great joy to us more than once—may have turned the current of our thoughts from dark into healthful channels.

John Bunyan wrote the *Pilgrim's Progress*, and that book has been a blessing to uncounted numbers. But John Bunyan was once a wicked man, and led a wandering, dissipated life, till he met with four poor women at Bedford sitting at a door in the

sun talking about the mercy of God in Christ, of the temptations of Satan and the wickedness of their own hearts. God multiplied the simple talk of these poor women into all the good that has been or will yet be accomplished by John Bunyan's writings. Such is the power of unremembered words.

A good woman passing a saloon saw a young man thrust out by the keeper, and so blinded was he with rage that he did not see the lady until she laid her hand on his arm and asked in a gentle voice what was the matter. A thunderbolt from a clear sky could not have startled the young man more than did those few gentle words from a motherly heart. Trembling from head to foot, and very pale, he looked at her a moment, and then said, "I thought it was my mother's voice. It was strangely like it. But she has been dead for many a year."

"You had, then, a mother that loved you?"

Ah, what a flood of memories these words brought up! A few kind words more were

spoken—words of hope, and courage, and cheer, that he still might make himself what that mother wished—and then they parted.

But the whole current of the young man's life was changed from that moment. In after years this lady met a noble Christian man whose life was a blessing to many, and learned from his lips that he was the youth whom her kind words had saved.

Much out of little—trust God for that. You say to the companion at your side who is impatient, and is speaking unkindly to some one else, "Be gentle and loving as the Saviour was, and as he has told us to be," and you think no more of those few words than if they had never been uttered. But God takes charge of them as they sink down into the soul, just as he takes care of the flower-seeds which you planted yesterday. He causes them to take root and grow, and that friend of yours becomes mild and forbearing, and awakens the love of every one. You see the great thing that

God has done, whilst neither of you knows that it all came out of the little talk you had together about returning good for evil.

Trust God, I say, for bringing much out of the little you do for him, whether it be the planting of seed in your garden or the giving of a penny to send the truth to those who have it not. He can multiply the penny as he multiplies the seed, and make it the instrument of bringing light and joy to many souls.

I have told you that God performs wonders in *nature* every day, and that what Jesus did with the loaves and fishes was more wonderful only because it was *above* nature. It did not require any more power to do this than it does to make the grass grow. Man cannot multiply the loaves or the grain. God only can do either, and he can do the same thing in different ways.

You think you would like to have been on the shore of the lake of Galilee, and seen

the lad and the basket and the loaves and the fishes and the five thousand and more who fed upon them, and left twelve basketsful over and above their need. But whilst you cannot be there to witness that scene, remember that there are wonders transpiring all around you. Not long ago the trees were stripped of their leaves, and seemed quite dead. And then God brought the sun back from his winter's journey, and told him to touch with his warm rays the frozen ground, and to bring up from sea and lake and river the rain-drops, and put them in the clouds; and then he told the clouds to water the earth, and buds began to swell, and leaves to multiply, until the woods and the hillsides were alive with beauty. The trees whose nature it is to be green all winter sent out a new growth from the very ends of the twigs that looked like the fingers of a hand held up to receive fresh jewels of emerald from God's full storehouse. The grass began to grow, the violets looked out

of their queer little eyes, and the butter-cups waked out of their long sleep and turned their bright faces toward the sky. To count these wonders you would have to count all the leaves upon all the trees, and every blade of grass and every flower.

Let me tell you a parable, which, though fictitious in itself, enforces a great truth. It runs in these words.

On a spring day young Solomon sat in deep meditation under the palm trees in the garden of his father the king. Nathan, his teacher, approached him, saying, "Of what are you thinking so earnestly?"

The youth raised his head, and replied, "I would like to see a miracle."

"A wish that I likewise indulged in in my youthful days," said the prophet, smiling.

"And was it ever gratified?" inquired the prince, eagerly.

"A man of God," continued Nathan, "came to me with a pomegranate seed in

his hand. 'Behold,' said he, 'what this seed will produce.' He then placed it in the ground and covered it. Scarcely had he removed his hand when the ground rose, and I saw two small leaves come forth. In a moment the leaves closed and became a round stem surrounded with bark, and the stem grew visibly taller and thicker. Then, as I looked, seven boughs came out of the stem, like the seven branches on the candlestick of the altar. The man of God then dipped water in the hollow of his hand out of the brook and sprinkled the boughs three times, and they hung at once full of green leaves, and we were surrounded with a cool shade and pleasant odors. 'What is it that sends to us this sweet fragrance?' I inquired. 'Do you not see,' said the man of God, 'how the purple blossoms are shooting out from among the leaves?' I would have spoken, but just then a gentle breeze swept through the leaves and scattered them around us like snow as it descends from the clouds. The

blossoms had scarcely fallen when the red pomegranates hung down among the leaves like the almonds on Aaron's rod. Then the man of God left me in deep astonishment."

Here Nathan ended, and Solomon eagerly inquired, "Where can I find this man? Is he still living?"

Nathan replied, "Son of David, I have related a dream."

When Solomon heard this he was grieved, and said, "How could you thus deceive me?"

But Nathan responded, "I have not deceived you, son of Jesse. In your father's garden you can witness all that I have told you. Does not the pomegranate and every other tree undergo these changes?"

"Yes," said Solomon, "but unobserved, and in the course of a long period."

Nathan replied, "Is it the less a divine work because it is accomplished in silence and retirement?"

Such a miracle as this may you witness

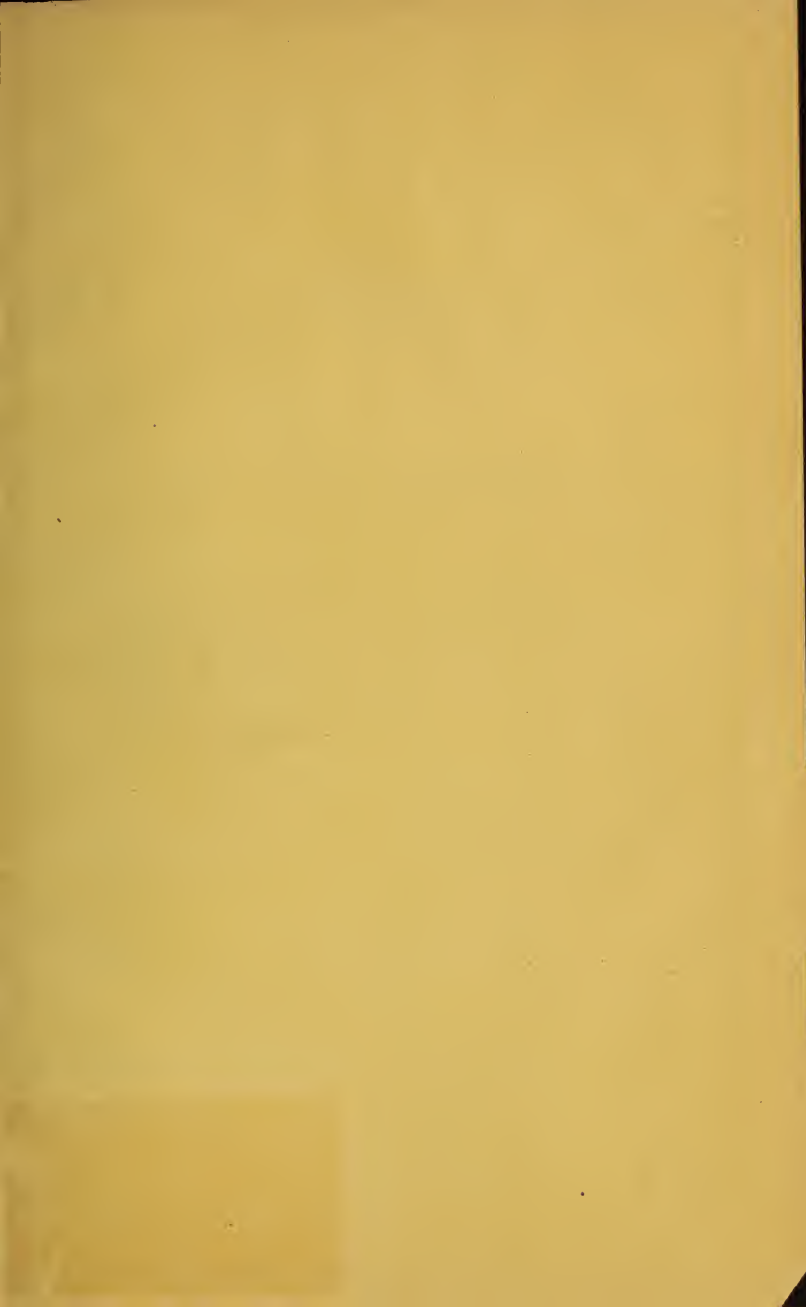
if you only put a single seed in the ground and watch its growth. Such a miracle are you, for you live, and move, and have your being in God's power and love.

God has wrought a still greater miracle in you and for you if he has given you a new heart. King David once said, "I am a wonder unto many," and so is every one who makes God his refuge, and, safe in his love, grows like a tree in a sheltered and well watered garden. Let the Saviour thus make you a miracle of his grace; then your good works and deeds will be multiplied for ever.

"The oak tree's boughs once touched the grass;
But every year they grew
A little farther from the ground,
And nearer toward the blue.

"So live that you each year may be,
While time glides swiftly by,
A little farther from the earth,
And nearer to the sky."





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